Tour "The Hajar Mountains Loop"

Discovery 4x4 self drive tour
14 days / 13 nights
2019-2020

After visiting Muscat, grand loop around the Hajar Mountain range. Start with the Western Hajar, its great valleys and its forts. Sleep in its small villages and explore its high massifs - Jebel Shams and Jebel Akhdar. A guide leads you to discover the heart of the range. Then reach the Eastern Hajar and its very diversified landscapes: the dunes of the Wahiba, the beaches of the Indian Ocean and the palm groves and pools of the wadis.
**Understand your travel proposition**

**Self drive tour**

The travelers themselves will drive along all the road transfers detailed in the program as well as along possible additional transfers to reach an activity place (except for transfers with driver or guide).

**Program type: "Freedom discovery"**

Each day, a number of possible activities - cultural discoveries and strolls - are proposed. It is up to the travelers, during their trip, to choose which activity they are interested in depending on their wishes and the time available. The times given for each activity and each transfer are intended to give an idea as accurate as possible of what can be done in one day.

**Driving level: 4x4**

The itinerary includes dirt roads without major difficulty but requiring a 4x4 vehicle. Under normal conditions, anybody can drive on these roads as long as he/she respects the basic safety rules. However, unpredictable events, especially weather-related, can make these dirt roads harder to negotiate.

**Possible activity**

Activity not requiring prior reservation. The travelers are free to go for them or not. Most of them are free of charge.

**Optional / Included activity**

Paying activity requiring prior reservation. If it is a guided activity, it may involve transfers. In this case, such transfers will be arranged by the guide or a driver, with their own vehicle.

**Variant**

Road transfer longer than the reference transfer but of a greater interest in terms of landscape or possible activity.

**Accommodation with surcharge**

Hotel not included in the standard package, proposed as an upgrade of the accommodation already included that day.

**Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfers</th>
<th>Landscapes (transfers &amp; activities)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
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OVERVIEW OF YOUR TOUR

DAY 1 - Muscat

Muscat International Airport to the Ghubrah district |15km-15min|
Mutrah District |1h-4h|
Old Muscat District and the Sultan's Palace |30min-1h|
The National Museum (Old Muscat district) |1h-3h|

Guesthouse (Ghubrah District) |BB|
Guesthouse (Azaiba District) |BB|

DAY 2 - From Muscat to Wakan

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (Ghubrah district) |45min-1h30|
Muscat to Nakhl |100km-1h10|
Nakhl fort |1h|
Nakhl to Wakan |50km-50min|4x4|

Village of Wakan (Wadi Mistal) |1h-5h|

Guesthouse (Wakan) |HB|

DAY 3 - From Wakan to the Jebel Shams

Wakan to Rustaq |70km-1h15|4x4|
Lower Wadi bani Awf |30min|
Rustaq to Murri |60km-50min|

Village of Murri & Wadi Sadaq canyon |30min-2h30|
Murri to Rumaylah : the Wadi Sadaq |15km-40min|4x4|
Rumaylah to the Al Ayn tombs |30km-40min|4x4|

Al Ayn Bronze Age tombs |30min-1h|

Al Ayn tombs to the Wadi Ghul |30km-1h|4x4|

Wadi Dam |1h-4h|

Wadi Ghul to the Jebel Shams plateau |25km-45min|4x4|

Hotel *** (Jebel Shams Plateau) Room Mountain View |HB|

DAY 4 - From the Jebel Shams to Misfat al Abriyeen

Jebel Shams Plateau to Al Khitaym |5km-10min|4x4|
### Day 5 - At the Heart of the Western Hajar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Misfat al Abriyeen to Al Hamra</td>
<td>6km-15min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Hamra to Sharaf al Alamain</td>
<td>30km-30min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharaf al Alamain pass</td>
<td>15min-1h</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guided excursion: Wadi bani Awf and village of Balad Sayt</td>
<td>2h</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharaf al Alamain to Al Hamra</td>
<td>30km-30min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Hamra to Misfat al Abriyeen</td>
<td>6km-15min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk in the palm grove of Misfat al Abriyeen</td>
<td>30min-2h</td>
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**Guesthouse (Misfat al Abriyeen) | HB**

### Day 6 - From Misfat al Abriyeen to Nizwa

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<tr>
<td>Misfat al Abriyeen to Al Hamra</td>
<td>6km-15min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town of Al Hamra</td>
<td>30min-2h</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Hamra to Nizwa</td>
<td>50km-45min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahla Fort</td>
<td>1h-2h</td>
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<td>Jabrin castle</td>
<td>1h-2h</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wadi Tanuf and Wadi Qashah</td>
<td>1h-5h</td>
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**Hotel *** (Nizwa) | BB**

### Day 7 - From Nizwa to the Jebel Akhdar

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Town of Nizwa</td>
<td>1h-3h</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nizwa to Birkat al Mouz</td>
<td>25km-30min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birkat al Mouz to Saiq: Up the Jebel Akhdar</td>
<td>40km-50min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk in the upper Wadi Halfayn</td>
<td>1h-1h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanging village of Soqrah</td>
<td>1h-1h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>The rose villages</td>
<td>1h-2h</td>
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**Hanging village of Soqrah | 15min**

**The rose villages | 1h-2h**
DAY 8 - From the Jebel Akhdar to the Wahiba desert

- Saiq to Birkat al Mouz: Down the Jebel Akhdar |40km-50min|4x4|
- Village of Birkat al Mouz |15min-1h30|
- Birkat al Mouz to Bidiyah |160km-2h15|
- Izki old town |30min-1h|
- Bidiyah to your desert camp (with a driver) |30km-45min|4x4+|
- Walking in the Wahiba desert |45min-2h|
- Hotel ** (Wahiba) Room Chalet |HB|
- Camping (Wahiba) |HB|

DAY 9 - From the Wahiba desert to Jaalan bani bu Hassan

- Your camp to Bidiyah (with a driver) |30km-45min|4x4+|
- Bidiyah to Al Kamil |55km-45min|
- Upper Wadi bani Khalid: Muqal pool |1h-2h|
- Lower Wadi bani Khalid: village and palm grove of Al Baatan |1h-3h|
- Al Kamil: Fortified houses and the Old Castle Museum |30min-1h30|
- Al Kamil to Jaalan bani bu Hassan |20km-25min|
- Hotel ** (Jaalan bani bu Hassan) |HB|

DAY 10 - From the Wahiba desert to the Indian Ocean

- Jaalan bani bu Hassan old town |30min|
- Jaalan bani bu Hassan to Ras al Hadd |105km-1h50|
- Jaalan bani bu Ali fort and Al Hamooda mosque |30min|
- Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve |1h|
- Hotel *** (Ras al Hadd) Room Hamoor |HB|

DAY 11 - From Ras al Hadd to Tiwi

- Ras al Hadd to Sur |40km-45min|
- Town of Sur |1h-3h|
- Sur to Tiwi: Along the Gulf of Oman |50km-45min|
DAY 12 - Between sea and mountains

- **Wadi Shab |1h-3h|**
- **Tiwi to Al Hajir |125km-1h15|**
- **Fins beach, coastal road and gazelle reserve |30min-1h|**
- **Wadi al Arbiyeen |2h-4h|**
- **Al Hajir to Yiti : The Wadi Mayh |20km-30min|4x4|**
- **Yiti to Qantab |5km-10min|**
- **Hotel *** (Qantab) |BB|**

DAY 13 - Day to relax at your beach resort

- **South Muscat coastline |1h-3h|**
- **Snorkelling in the Bandar Khiran marine reserve |2h|**
- **Hotel *** (Qantab) |BB|**

DAY 14 - Day to relax at your hotel and departure

- **Qantab to Muscat International Airport |45km-50min|**
DAY 1 - Muscat

Arrival in Muscat International Airport. Our agent welcomes you, hands over the travel documents to you and assists you in picking up your rental car. Full day to visit the Omani capital and its surroundings.

Transfer

Muscat International Airport to the Ghubrah district |15km-15min|

For your first drive in Oman, you take the main highway crossing Muscat, the Sultan Qaboos Street, up to the Ghubrah district, where lies the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

Possible activity

Mutarah District |1h-4h|

This historic district is the most interesting in the capital for tourists, with its beautiful sea-front (the so-called Corniche), its famous souq, its fish and vegetable market and even a short trekking path.

Possible activity

Old Muscat District and the Sultan’s Palace |30min-1h|

A few kilometres from Mutrah, with its numerous mosques and government buildings, this small district is the actual capital of Oman, from which extended the whole city. You can enjoy this quiet place by a short stroll around the Sultan Palace. This is also where the National Museum is located.
The National Museum (Old Muscat district) | 1h-3h |
Open to the public since the end of 2016, the National Museum displays rich collections describing Oman history. The artefacts, on show in bright rooms, are arranged according to the period they belong to, from prehistory to nowadays, or sorted by theme as in the Maritime Gallery.

Accommodation

Guesthouse (Ghubrah District) | BB |
A one-of-a-kind accommodation: a true guesthouse managed by an Omani family! In this very conservative country, it is a unique opportunity to stay with locals. You can notably share with your hosts during breakfast, which you take in the garden or in the living room of the main house (the rest of the family house is private). The 4 guest rooms are arranged separately, around a pleasant garden. The house is located in the middle of the city of Muscat, halfway between the airport and the historical district of Mutrah (both at 15-20 min). The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is a few minutes away by car.

Guesthouse (Azaiba District) | BB |
Two big villas converted into a guesthouse with 10 comfortable and tastefully-decorated rooms. Located in a posh neighbourhood, it is only a 5-min walk to the Azaiba beach, where you can find a Lebanese restaurant and a small park where young Omanis sell grilled food in the evening. It is only a 10-min drive to the airport, 15 min to the Grand Mosque and about half an hour to the historic districts (Mutrah, Old Muscat).

The guesthouse has a 22-m long swimming pool and 2 living rooms. Breakfast can be eaten al fresco close to the pool.
DAY 2 - From Muscat to Wakan

Day dedicated to the discovery of the north-eastern side of the Western Hajar. At the foot of the mountains lies the small town of Nakhl and its beautiful fort. Shortly after, you drive into the mountains following the gorge cut by the Wadi Mistal. The latter shelters the superb village of Wakan, from where a hike offering beautiful views over the Ghubrah Bowl is possible. Night at the village guesthouse.

Possible activity

🔍 Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (Ghubrah district) |45min-1h30|

A magnificent mosque, the largest of the country and the only one allowed to non-muslim visitors. The main praying hall, famous for its huge chandelier, is truly spectacular.

Possible activity

🚗 Muscat to Nakhl |100km-1h10|

Leave Muscat by the motorway and carry on until you arrive at the town of Nakhl.

Possible activity

🔍 Nakhil fort |1h|

The Nakhil fort, one of the most beautiful forts in Oman on account of its architecture and setting, overlooks the town and the palm grove from a rocky prominence. The residence of the wali (province governor), it protected commercial routes between the wadis and the coast. Thoroughly restored in 1990, it offers nice sweeping views of the surrounding landscape, the Batinah plain and the first massifs of the nearby Western Hajar.
The road follows along the northern slopes of the Jebel Akhdar before entering the mountains along the Wadi Mistal. A short but steep dirt road enables to climb up to the superb village of Wakan.

Transfer

Nakhl to Wakan |50km-50min|4x4|

Located at the far end of the Ghubrah Bowl, large cirque formed by the Wadi Mistal and its tributaries, on the slopes of the Jebel Akhdar, the tiny village of Wakan is a real jewel with its orchards - especially in February, when the almond and apricot trees blossom (at an altitude of 1500 m!).

If you want to go further up, a donkey trail climbs up to a pass of the Jebel Akhdar (2300 m high).

Possible activity

Village of Wakan (Wadi Mistal) |1h-5h|

Guesthouse set up in 5 houses of the beautiful old village of Wakan, perched at the far end of the Wadi Mistal. The 3 first rooms opened in September 2018 and the other 15 open little by little. The view from the terrace of the café/restaurant is just amazing: located at the lower level of the village, it embraces the whole Ghubrah Bowl.

The bedrooms and bathrooms are small but comfortable and tastefully in a traditional Omani style and using noble materials - stone and wood.
DAY 3 - From Wakan to the Jebel Shams

A series of tarmac and dirt roads enable to go around the western side of the Jebel Shams massif. Little known, this region is all the more beautiful and wild. First leave the Wadi Mistal and go to Rustaq. Then drive on a beautiful road winding between the main range and ophiolite massifs, going past some palm groves. From the pretty village of Murri and the Wadi Sadaq canyon, the dirt road goes along the western side of the Jebel Shams and takes you to the foot of the Jebel Misht. There, you pass by the Al Ayn Bronze Age tombs and the Wadi Dam. You change from one valley to another to eventually climb the Jebel Shams. Your accommodation sits on the mountain, about 2000 m high, very close to the "Grand Canyon of Arabia”.

Transfer

Wakan to Rustaq | 70km-1h15 | 4x4 |

Leave the mountains following the Wadi Mistal and continue along the northern slopes of the Jebel Akhdar. The road winds its way between some rocky hills along the Wadi bani Kharus, goes through Al Awabi and past the Wadi bani Awf entrance.

Possible activity along the transfer

Lower Wadi bani Awf | 30min |

The first kilometres of the Wadi bani Awf are really spectacular. Following the meanders of the wadi, you enter the mountains through a deep canyon fringed with palm groves at the foot of towering cliffs.

Transfer

Rustaq to Murri | 60km-50min |

Nice small road winding, along the Wadi bani Ghafr, between the northern side of the high massif of the Jebel Shams and some low rocky ophiolite hills. The valley is scattered with small villages and their palm groves.
Pretty little village and its palm grove surrounded by mountains. The ruins of the old stone village and those of the fort overlook the scene from their respective hills. Nearby lies the Wadi Sadaq. It shaped a narrow canyon that cuts an impressive fold on the north-western side of the Jebel Shams. Scrambling a little, it is possible to explore it by foot and, according to the rains, you can find natural pools to bathe.

Village of Murri & Wadi Sadaq canyon | 30min-2h30 |

This little-used dirt road follows the north-western side of the Jebel Shams along the small Wadi Sadaq and arrives at the big village of Rumaylah.

Murri to Rumaylah : the Wadi Sadaq | 15km-40min | 4x4 |

From the western side of the Jebel Shams, the road goes around the smaller Jebel Misht with its very distinctive shape and reaches the large and beautiful valley of the Wadi al Ayn.

Rumaylah to the Al Ayn tombs | 30km-40min | 4x4 |
Listed as world heritage, the archeological site of Al Ayn is made of monumental tombs, similar to stone towers a few metres in diameter and height, dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. The setting is superb: a small hill overlooking a palm grove with the majestic cliffs of the Jebel Misht in the background. The tombs are reached by foot from the road in a few minutes.

Possible activity

Al Ayn Bronze Age tombs |30min-1h|

Passing between several massifs of different colours and shapes, you discover the beautiful Wadi al Ayn and then reach, by a mountain dirt road, the Wadi Ghul, at the foot of the Jebel Shams.

Transfer

Al Ayn tombs to the Wadi Ghul |30km-1h|4x4|

Possible activity along the transfer

Wadi Dam |1h-4h|

Walk upstream in this narrow valley to reach in less than 20 minutes a first pool where you can swim and maybe jump from some rocks. The more adventurous can go further in the gorge to reach a second pool.

You can also walk through the Dam palm grove, overlooked by the majestic Jebels Misht and Shams.
The ascent on the steep slopes of the Jebel Shams massif offers ever more plunging views over the surrounding mountains and wadis. The dirt road comes to an end, at an altitude greater than 1800 m, on the rim of the spectacular Grand Canyon.

Accommodation

Hotel *** (Jebel Shams Plateau) Room Mountain View |HB|

Hotel fully renovated in 2017 located on the Jebel Shams plateau, more than 2000 m high. The viewpoints over the Grand Canyon of Arabia are next door and the start of the Balcony Walk only a few minutes away. The hike to the summit starts right next to the hotel.

The hotel has a restaurant using as much local products as possible.

The Mountain View rooms are built of local stones and have a shaded balcony looking at the mountains.

DAY 4 - From the Jebel Shams to Misfat al Abriyeen

Day dedicated to the discovery of the Jebel Shams massif and its "Grand Canyon of Arabia". The latter can be explored from the bottom, by car, starting at the beautiful village of Ghul and continuing along the Wadi Nakhr, or from the top, by foot along the famous "Balcony Walk". From the mountain, you go back down to Al Hamra, its vast palm grove and ecomuseum. Your guesthouse awaits you in the picturesque village of Misfat al Abriyeen, perched above the town of Al Hamra.

Transfer

Jebel Shams Plateau to Al Khitaym |5km-10min|4x4|

The dirt road runs along the Grand Canyon up to the hamlet of Al Khitaym.
Possible activity

The Balcony Walk: Hike above the Grand Canyon |1h-4h|

A wonderful hike along an old donkey track down to an abandoned village. This mid-cliff path follows the Wadi Nakhr several hundreds meters above the bottom and provides breathtaking views on the "Grand Canyon of Arabia". This easy walk path, with a few rocky stretches, gently slopes down to the village nested at mid-height of immense cliffs.

Transfer

Al Khitaym to Al Hamra: Down the Jebel Shams |45km-1h15|4x4|

The Jebel Shams road being a dead end, return by the same way you came up, admiring the spectacular panorama again, and then keep driving along the Wadi Ghul up to the town of Al Hamra.

Possible activity along the transfer

Old village of Ghul & Grand Canyon of Arabia |05min-1h30|

The Wadi Nakhr has cut an incredible valley in the heart of the Jebel Shams, the "Grand Canyon of Arabia". Make a photo stop in front of the old stone village of Ghul, clinging to the base of the mountain, discover the ruins by foot up to a fine viewpoint or follow the wadi by car between the spectacular cliffs.
The village of Misfat al Abriyeen lies just above Al Hamra, on the south side of the Western Hajar mountains. On the way you will enjoy nice views of the town.

Al Hamra to Misfat al Abriyeen |6km-15min|

Discover with a local guide the way of life and the traditions of the inhabitants of this old village, one of the most beautiful in Oman. You especially learn how the irrigation system of the palm grove works.

Guided visit of the village of Misfat al Abriyeen |2h30|

Small guesthouse at the entrance of Misfat al Abriyeen, next to the beautiful palm grove of the village. Ancient stone houses have been converted into bedrooms. They are small and the comfort is basic (mattresses on the floor), but what a setting!

Meals are taken on a terraced roof overlooking the palm grove and the old village. The "majlis" (sitting area) offers the same view.

The bathrooms are shared.

Accommodation

Guesthouse (Misfat al Abriyeen) |HB|

DAY 5 - At the heart of the Western Hajar

Day to discover the Wadi bani Awf. From your accommodation, you first drive up to the Sharaf al Alamain pass, where you leave your car. Your guide makes you discover the spectacular Wadi bani Awf and its famous village of Balad Sayt, by 4x4 then by foot. Then he drives you back to your car and you return to your accommodation.
Transfer

Misfat al Abriyeen to Al Hamra | 6km - 15min |

Return to Al Hamra.

Transfer

Al Hamra to Sharaf al Alamain | 30km - 30min |

Cross Al Hamra and its palm grove with prosperous-looking houses before taking the road that goes uphill up to the pass. It offers nice views, in clear days, of the piedmont and the towns in the plain.
The Sharaf al Alamain pass, at an altitude of 2000 m, discloses the spectacular panorama of the Wadi bani Awf valley.

Possible activity

Sharaf al Alamain | 15min - 1h |

The Sharaf al Alamain pass, at an altitude of some 2000 m, affords breathtaking sights, in clear days, to the south over the foothills of the Western Hajar and the towns in the plain, to the north over the heart of the mountains, cut through by deep wadis.
The scenery is already exceptional from the road, but a short walk along the crest offers superb views down onto the villages of Hat and Balad Sayt, from the top of cliffs more than 800 m high!
Guided excursion: Wadi bani Awf and village of Balad Sayt |2h|

From the Sharaf al Alamain pass, your guide drives you in 4x4 on a spectacular dirt road going down, in the heart of the Western Hajar, up to the Wadi bani Awf. There await the superb village of Balad Sayt. Surrounded by high arid mountains and accessible by road since only 1984, it is a real jewel with its palm grove, culture terraces and its high-perched little fort. Admire it from the various viewpoints or take a walk in its gardens. You can also access the village by foot through a little gorge as was done in the old days.

Your guide then takes you back to your car, at the Sharaf al Alamain pass.

Sharaf al Alamain to Al Hamra |30km-30min|

From the Sharaf al Alamain pass, the road zigzags down to the foot of the mountains, offering pretty views, on clear days, of the piedmont and the towns in the plain south of the Western Hajar.

Al Hamra to Misfat al Abriyeen |6km-15min|

Drive back to Misfat al Abriyeen.
The old stone village of Misfat al Abriyeen, invisible from the plain, is one of the most photogenic in Oman, with its terraced palm groves on both sides of a narrow valley.

**Possible activity**

Walk in the palm grove of Misfat al Abriyeen | 30min-2h |

The old stone village of Misfat al Abriyeen, invisible from the plain, is one of the most photogenic in Oman, with its terraced palm groves on both sides of a narrow valley.

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**Accommodation**

Guesthouse (Misfat al Abriyeen) | HB |

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Meals are taken on a terraced roof overlooking the palm grove and the old village. The "majlis" (sitting area) offers the same view.

The bathrooms are shared.

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**DAY 6 - From Misfat al Abriyeen to Nizwa**

After having enjoyed the palm grove of Misfat al Abriyeen, you can visit the nearby town of Al Hamra and its ecomuseum. Then you pass near the majestic Bahla fort, recognized as a World Heritage site, and the beautiful Wadi Tanuf, before you settle in your hotel in Nizwa, which souq comes to life in the evening.

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**Transfer**

Misfat al Abriyeen to Al Hamra | 6km-15min |

Return to Al Hamra.
The town of Al Hamra lies at the foot of the Western Hajar, in a small plain around the Wadi Ghul, and offers nice views of the Jebel Shams. It has a large palm grove where it is pleasant to stroll. The adobe ruins of the old town comprise some quite well preserved houses, one of which hosting an interesting little ecomuseum.

The road between Nizwa and Al Hamra runs across the narrow plain tucked between the high Jebel Akhdar range and the much less significant ophiolite reliefs of the Jebel Hallat and passes close to Bahla, famous for its beautiful fort.

The only Omani fort recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Bahla fort is also the largest and one of the oldest of the country. Enclosed in high walls dotted with many watch towers, it majestically dominates the old town and palm grove. You will get a spectacular panoramic view of the fort and surroundings from a nearby hill.
Home of the Yaruba Imams during the 17th and 18th centuries, Jabrin castle stands out among Omani forts by its rooms beautifully decorated and fitted with carpets and ancient furniture. Audioguides are available for an in-depth discovery.

Possible activity along the transfer

Jabrin castle |1h-2h|

The mighty Wadi Tanuf and its tributary the Wadi Qashah flow down from the Jebel Akhdar, cutting deep and beautiful valleys in the mountains. Discover them by car along a short dirt road that leads to a superb palm grove and a small canyon. A donkey path allows experienced hikers to go even further inside the valley. At the mouth of the wadi, the ruined mudbrick village of Tanuf is a painful reminder of the unknown "Jebel War".

Possible activity along the transfer

Wadi Tanuf and Wadi Qashah |1h-5h|

Accommodation

Hotel *** (Nizwa) |BB|

DAY 7 - From Nizwa to the Jebel Akhdar

After you visited Nizwa, its souq and its fort, departure for the high massif of the Jebel Akhdar. Birkat al Mouz and its large palm grove lie at the foot of the mountain. From there, you drive up the plateau, 2000 m high, where await small villages and beautiful viewpoints overlooking the surrounding wadis: the classic Rose Villages or Wadi bani Habib (the latter can be crowded from mid-morning), the lesser-known hanging village of Soqrah or the off-the-beaten-path Wadi Halfayn. Night on the plateau.
Nizwa, the biggest town in the region, lies in a strategic position, at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar and on the rim of the desert, at the starting point of the main road connecting the coast and the south of the mountains. It has historically been the capital of the interior, and even, occasionally, the official capital of the country. It also was the capital of ibadism and is still today markedly more conservative than its historical rival, Muscat. Which makes it all the more attractive to those searching for "authentic" Arabia! Its famous souq and its 17th century fort, with its unique architecture, attract many visitors.

**Possible activity**

**Town of Nizwa | 1h-3h |**

The road runs eastwards along the southern slope of the high Jebel Akhdar massif.

**Transfer**

**Nizwa to Birkat al Mouz | 25km-30min |**

The road enters the mountains by the Wadi Muaydin and then climbs up for 1500 m to the Saiq Plateau, where Saiq Katenah, the only (small) town of the massif is located.

**Transfer**

**Birkat al Mouz to Saiq : Up the Jebel Akhdar | 40km-50min | 4x4 |**
Short hike up to a breathtaking viewpoint overlooking the whole valley of the Wadi Halfayn, going down from the Jebel Akhdar to the plain, more than 1000 m below.

Possible activity along the transfer

Walk in the upper Wadi Halfayn |1h-1h30|

This old small village is built against a high cliff. On the heights of the Wadi bani Kharus, the dirt road offers good views over the stone houses, most of which are not used anymore.

Note that it is forbidden to enter the village on weekdays and you can only admire it from the road.

Possible activity

Hanging village of Soqrah |15min|

The Jebel Akhdar is known for its pomegranate and rose water production. The fruits and roses are especially grown on the terraces of three villages, linked by a marked path. Along the edge of the plateau, the way overlooks the Wadi Salut.

The best time to go for this walk is April, when the roses are blooming, but it is possible to do it year-round.
The ruins of this stone village lie on one side of a small valley crossing the plateau. On the opposite side of the wadi are the gardens, full of pomegranate and walnut trees. A wide staircase going down from the road to the wadi bed was recently built.

### Accommodation

**Hotel *** (Saiq Katenah) Room Deluxe | BB |**

Hotel opened in April 2018. It is comfortable and very well located on the edge of the Saiq plateau, 2000 m high. The terrace, where lie the (heated) swimming pool, the jacuzzi and the children playground, offers superb views over the valley and the famous Rose Villages, only a few hundreds of metres away. It has two restaurants with outdoor seating (international cuisine and barbecue).

The Deluxe rooms are divided between the 3 floors of the main building, half on the valley side and half on the town side. We obviously request the first ones whenever possible.

### DAY 8 - From the Jebel Akhdar to the Wahiba desert

Day dedicated to the transfer from the mountains to the desert. After having enjoyed the Jebel Akhdar, you go back down to Birkat al Mouz and pass close to Izki old town. The road then takes you, across the arid plain, to the edge of the desert. You eventually reach your accommodation, set among the dunes of the Wahiba.

### Transfer

**Saiq to Birkat al Mouz : Down the Jebel Akhdar | 40km-50min | 4x4 |**

The Jebel Akhdar road being a dead end, return by the same way you came up, enjoying the plunging views down to the plain again.
The big village of Birkat al Mouz, at the end of the Wadi Muaydin, has at all times been the entrance to the Jebel Akhdar range as evidenced by its fort and numerous watch towers. Its large palm grove and the ruins of its old districts can be watched from a panoramic viewpoint or during a stroll.

Possible activity

Village of Birkat al Mouz |15min-1h30|

The road goes away from the high summits of the Jebel Akhdar and crosses low rocky relief areas to finally reach a narrow plain between the Eastern Hajar mountains and the dunes of the Wahiba desert.

Transfer

Birkat al Mouz to Bidiyah |160km-2h15|

The town of Izki, at the south entrance of the Samail Gap, is one of the oldest town in Oman. Its ancient walled town is among the most worth visiting of the country. Even if its mudbrick houses are now ruined, it boasts two nice traditional mosques.

Possible activity along the transfer

Izki old town |30min-1h|
Transfer

**Bidiyah to your desert camp (with a driver) | 30km-45min | 4x4+**

Leave your car at Bidiyah where a driver from the camp will meet you. The 20 km drive in the dunes is a first contact with the Wahiba desert. You proceed along a "valley", between long orange dunes about 50 meters in height.

Possible activity

**Walking in the Wahiba desert | 45min-2h**

What a delight to walk out of the camp and climb up the nearby dunes to watch the sun sink behind the horizon! But the grazing light in the early morning over the orange sand undulations is most appealing too...

Accommodation

**Hotel ** (Wahiba) Room Chalet | HB |

One of the accommodations the most inside the Wahiba desert, surrounded by the dunes. The Chalet rooms are simple, with a "bedouin tent" feel and have an attached bathroom opened to the sky.

Note that the power of the camp is provided by solar panels and is not always working round the clock.
What a luxury to have the desert to yourself! Private camp with 2 tents, among the dunes, a few kilometres away from the main camp. The large bedouin-style tents have comfortable beds and are nicely decorated. The camp has simple shared toilet and bathroom. One person from the main camp stays on site and organises the meals.

DAY 9 - From the Wahiba desert to Jaalan bani bu Hassan

When leaving a sand desert, what could be more enjoyable than bathing in a wadi or strolling in the shadow of a lush palm grove? Two different routes can lead you to the Wadi bani Khalid. Past Al Kamil and its old fortified houses, the road continues southwards between the eastern edge of the Wahiba desert and the last massif of the Eastern Hajar.

A driver takes you back to your car.

The road follows a narrow plain between the Eastern Hajar mountains and the Wahiba dunes.
This large pool, between the Muqal palm grove and the gorge of the wadi, has been developed for tourism and is highly appreciated by locals who come there for picnics at weekends. The setting is magnificent and it is possible to walk along the wadi or go up a donkey path for a bird's eye view of the place.

The small village of Al Baatan has a very beautiful palm grove along the Wadi bani Khalid. The walk, along a falaj winding between palm and mango trees, is very pleasant and gives access to a small natural pool. It is also possible to proceed on a rocky path up to a larger pool.

The old town of Al Kamil offers a few beautiful examples of fortified houses, typical in this area. One of them has been converted into a little museum, its first attractions maybe being to be able to enter one of these old houses and to meet its owner if he is present.
Transfer

Al Kamil to Jaalan bani bu Hassan | 20km-25min |
Short transfer between the neighbour towns of Al Kamil and Jaalan bani bu Hassan, standing between the Eastern Hajar and the Wahiba desert.

Accommodation

Hotel ** (Jaalan bani bu Hassan) | HB |
Camp located in one of the "woodlands", sandy and wooded areas that borders the eastern side of the Wahiba desert. The rooms, comfortable and with a Bedouin-style decoration, are settled around a "majlis" (sitting area) and at the foot of a small dune (the desert proper is a few kilometres away).

DAY 10 - From the Wahiba desert to the Indian Ocean

You drive through the towns of the north-east of the Wahiba. The road continues crossing a mineral landscape up to the coast and follows it to finally arrive at the village of Ras al Hadd, where lies your accommodation.

Possible activity

Jaalan bani bu Hassan old town | 30min |
On the edge of the palm grove, the old town of Jaalan bani bu Hassan offers the classic adobe ruins. It comprises a few old fortified houses in a fairly good state of preservation, some of which were still inhabited in the eighties. With their several storeys and small openings, they are characteristic of the region.
A road traversing very varied landscapes! Starting between the desert and the mountain, it comes to an end along the beaches and cliffs of the Indian Ocean after passing through typical towns of the region and a few dunes.

**Jaalan bani bu Hassan to Ras al Hadd |105km-1h50|**

Transfer

One of the largest non-restored forts in Oman, Jaalan bani bu Ali fort is really impressive. Part of the structure collapsed but there still are important remains, including the central keep. Very close to the fort lies a surprising old mosque with 52 small domes.

**Jaalan bani bu Ali fort and Al Hamooda mosque |30min|**

Possible activity along the transfer

Guided visit organized by the reserve, which protects 40 km of coastline and the turtles that come there to lay eggs. On the beach, watch the females that crawl out of the water, at night, to dig out their nests and lay some one hundred eggs before heading back to the high sea.

**Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve |1h|**

Optional activity
Hotel opened in the end of 2017. For the sea view and the beach, it is the best located hotel in the Ras al Hadd/Ras al Jinz region. Built on a small rocky tip between the Gulf of Oman and the Ras al Hadd laguna, it is surrounded on 3 sides by the sea. There is a direct access to the long Ras al Hadd beach that ends at the foot of the hotel. Even if it is used by the village fishermen, it is possible to swim next to the hotel. The village of Ras al Hadd is a few minutes away by car and the centre from which is organised the turtle watching is 20 minutes away.

The Hamoor rooms are comfortable and decorated in an Omani style. Each has a terrace with table and chairs.

**Accommodation**

**Hotel *** (Ras al Hadd) Room Hamoor |HB|**

**DAY 11 - From Ras al Hadd to Tiwi**

Day dedicated to the discovery of the north-eastern coast. First, a visit of the beautiful town of Sur is a must. Then, in close proximity to your hotel, two wadis close to each other expect your arrival: Tiwi and Shab. The latter, the most famous, is ideal for bathing, but it may be a bit crowded by mid-morning, especially at weekends. The former, wilder and less accessible, is certainly more spectacular.

**Transfer**

**Ras al Hadd to Sur |40km-45min|**

From the Indian Ocean to the Oman Gulf, the road runs along the Khawr Grama laguna and across a plateau before reaching the beach of Sur.
A lovely seaside city, Sur is one of the few Omani towns that is worth a visit. Its strategic position – a peninsula between the sea and a laguna – and its old white houses with beautiful doors add up to bring about a real touch of charm. The last traditional dhow building yard is located here – a must visit! As a fishing town, its fish souq is worth a look. Finally, a watchtower perched on a hill provides a superb view of the area.

The highway runs along the coastline, squeezed between the Gulf of Oman and the Eastern Hajar, providing nice views of the sea and the mountains.

Discover this fantastic wadi first by car. The road, sometimes at the bottom of the valley, sometimes on the heights, offers spectacular views over the palm-fringed wadi bed and its natural pools nestled among huge boulders fallen down from the high cliffs on each side. Walking on a marked trail is also possible to discover the wadi at a slower pace.
Comfortable hotel on a hill overlooking the Gulf of Oman and the village of Tiwi nearby. It is ideally situated to visit the Wadis Shab and Tiwi, only a few minutes away by car. A staircase leads down to the white pebble beach where swimming is possible. The hotel has a small swimming pool and a restaurant, both with views on the sea.

**Hotel *** (Tiwi) Room Standard |HB|**

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**DAY 12 - Between sea and mountains**

Day dedicated to the discovery of the wadis of the Eastern Hajar and the coast between Tiwi and Muscat. In addition to the Wadis Tiwi and Shab, you can make detours, on the way towards Muscat, on nice dirt roads to discover the Wadis al Arbiyeen and Dayqah. The former is a spectacular valley with a few pools to refresh and swim (one is just a few steps away). The latter boasts the largest dam lake of Oman, an unreal vision in this mineral landscape. The coast is attractive too, with the beautiful beach of Fins and one of the very few places where watching wild gazelles is possible. Finally, you cross the Jebel abu Daud to reach the coast and your accommodation.

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**Possible activity**

**Wadi Shab |1h-3h|**

The most famous wadi in Oman! Leave your car right under the highway and start walking upstream on the mostly dry river bed. Marvel at this deep canyon and reach the first pools. Continue further along the base of the cliff and between the small boulders until you cannot avoid swimming... up to an incredible small pool with a waterfall hidden under some huge rocks!

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**Transfer**

**Tiwi to Al Hajir |125km-1h15|**

The highway, first running between the sea and the mountains, goes past the entrance of the Wadi al Arbiyeen, then veers inland to find a way around the Jebel abu Daud massif.
Close to the fishermen’s village of Fins is a superb white pebble beach with turquoise waters. The road that goes along the coast between Fins and the Wadi al Arbiyeen is worth the detour for its nice views upon the sea. It also passes through a protected area hosting some gazelles.

From the sea side, drive inside the mountains on a dirt road along the bed of this spectacular wadi, dotted with some villages and palm groves. A very large water pool awaits you to swim. A nice walk along the wadi is also possible. The way back to the coast is by another road.

Cross the Jebel Abu Daud mountains via the spectacular Wadi Mayh. First a narrow canyon, the valley widens and you discover small villages and their palm gardens. You cannot believe you are so close to Muscat !

From the Wadi Mayh, the road keeps crossing the coastal massif up to the cove where your hotel lies.
Hotel and diving club located on its private beach, in a beautiful rocky cove, only 20 minutes away from the capital.
It has a swimming pool (sometimes used by the divers), an international-cuisine restaurant with a terrace looking at the sea, a bar and a shisha bar, both on the beach.
It organises sea excursions for diving or snorkelling.

The rooms have a traditional architecture. Called "barastis", they are bungalows made of palm leaves. They are equipped with all the modern comfort and have a small terrace and an attached bathroom with stone walls and palm roof.

**Accommodation**

Hotel *** (Qantab) |BB|

**DAY 13 - Day to relax at your beach resort**

Full day to enjoy your hotel, its swimming pool, its beach and the activities it offers.

**Possible activity**

***South Muscat coastline |1h-3h|***

Drive along this surprising coast, meeting of the mountains and the sea, with its small coves and islands, occasionally fringed with mangrove or beaches (some from where swimming is possible). Stop on the way at the Al Bustan Palace for a tea in its somptuous decor.

**Optional activity**

***Snorkelling in the Bandar Khiran marine reserve |2h|***

From one of the marinas of Muscat, follow the coast onboard a small boat. You reach the Bandar Khiran marine reserve, maybe the most beautiful part of this rocky coast. In one of the many coves, you can swim and watch the plentiful multi coloured fishes (fins, masks and snorkels provided).
Hotel *** (Qantab) | BB |
Hotel and diving club located on its private beach, in a beautiful rocky cove, only 20 minutes away from the capital. It has a swimming pool (sometimes used by the divers), an international-cuisine restaurant with a terrace looking at the sea, a bar and a shisha bar, both on the beach. It organises sea excursions for diving or snorkelling.

The rooms have a traditional architecture. Called “barastis”, they are bungalows made of palm leaves. They are equipped with all the modern comfort and have a small terrace and an attached bathroom with stone walls and palm roof.

DAY 14 - Day to relax at your hotel and departure
Day to enjoy your hotel and the beach. Then transfer to the airport and departure.

Transfer

Qantab to Muscat International Airport | 45km-50min |
Drive back to Muscat and the airport using a nice coastal road then crossing the whole capital city from east to west.
Rental car drop-off.
PRICES / TERMS AND CONDITIONS

01/10/2019 - 23/12/2019 exc. 09-27/11/2019

| Number of people | 2 | 4 |
| Price per person in double room (in OMR) | 920 | 685 |
| **Toyota Fortuner** or similar (14 days) | 1 | 1 |

Options and extras

- **Accommodation upgrade on day 8**: 30 OMR per person
- **Private camp, HB**: 30 OMR per person
- **Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve on day 10**: 7 OMR per person
- **Snorkelling in the Bandar Khiran marine reserve on day 13**: 20 OMR per person

*Prices valid at the dates and for the types of room mentioned above.*
*These prices are given in Omani rials (OMR).*
*For conversion into another currency, you can use [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com). Note that these conversions do not include bank fees and transfer charges.*

*Note that this document is an quote and that no reservation has been made to this day.*
*Prices are therefore subject to changes in accordance with the availability of accommodations, vehicles and guides at the time of the reservation. Inssofar as possible, we offer alternatives of equivalent quality and cost in the event of unavailability.*

Proposed vehicle (non contractual photo)

*Toyota Fortuner*

SUV 2x4/4x4 2.7L automatic

Number of people

- **2**
- **4**

The price of the tour includes:

- Meet and greet service and rental car pick up assistance
- Your travel documents
- The whole self drive tour recorded in a GPS application
- An Oman road map (and a Muscat road map if required by the programme)
- A mobile phone with credit for 1 hour of local calls
- Phone assistance by our local agency throughout your trip
- Accommodations as mentioned in the programme
- Meals at the accommodations as mentioned in the programme along with each accommodation (cf. key)
- Lunches on guided days
- Bottled water in hotels
- Included activities as mentioned in the programme
- For each included guided activity:
  - The guide
  - The car(s) and driver(s) if required for this activity
  - Safety and camping equipment (tents, mattresses, kitchenware) if required for this activity
- Included transfers with driver or guide as mentioned in the program
- The rental of the above-mentioned vehicle(s), for the above-mentioned period of time, with:
  - 2 possible drivers
  - Unlimited kilometres
  - Comprehensive insurance: zero excess in case of damage (provided you get a police report)
  *Caution: Damages occurred when driving off roads or off trails clearly marked on the terrain are not covered by the insurance (particularly when driving on sand).*
Carbon offsetting for the mileage driven during your tour

On completion of your trip, we grant our specialist partner a certain amount in order to offset the CO2 emitted during the transfers.

The price of the tour does not include:

- VAT: nonexistent to date, it should be implemented in 2019 at the rate of 5%
- International flights
- Tourist visa fees: as at 01/01/2019, 5 OMR for 10 days or 20 OMR for 30 days (per person)
  
- Meals not included in the program (from 1.5 OMR per person in small restaurants or 5 OMR at hotels)
- Beverages
- Entrance fees, if any, of the “possible activities” mentioned in the program (forts: 0.5 OMR pp; museums: 2 to 5 OMR pp)
- Tips to guides and drivers, if any
- Sleeping bags and personal camping equipment (headlight) if required
- Personal expenses
- Fuel for your self driven car(s) (approx. 30 to 50 OMR per car and per week of tour)
- The rental car refundable deposit: the amount of 125 OMR per vehicle is blocked on your credit card but not debited
- Fines for driving offenses (speed cameras notably)
- Tyre repair or replacement fees in case of puncture
- The cost of repairing damages suffered by the rental cars if not justified by a police report
- Your personal repatriation insurance
- Your medical insurance