

Overview of Oman

Home to spectacular landscapes and undiluted cultural traditions, Oman offers travellers an enchanting and authentic Arabian experience. The destination occupies the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, and is bordered by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Its topography is varied and dramatic, with rocky mountains and deep water inlets in the north, rolling dunes and salt flats in the central interior, verdant green hills in the southern Dhofar province, and a coastline stretching thousands of miles with magnificent beaches and cosy coves.

In fact, the main reason people travel to Oman is the astounding beauty of the natural landscape. The dramatic coastline of Masirah Island, the rolling sand dunes of the vast Wahiba Sands desert, the prehistoric fossils in the valleys around Buraimi, and the rugged Hajar Mountains are all unforgettable experiences on any Oman holiday.

Sightseeing and activities are mainly restricted to Muscat and the southern town of Salalah, which is famed for its seafood, frankincense trees, and the ruins of the palace of the Queen of Sheba. Accommodation is offered mainly in luxury resort hotels.

Making responsible use of oil revenue, Muscat has taken on the veneer of a prosperous modern Arab city without losing its old world charm and heritage. It features forts, palaces, and other historic sites of interest to visitors, as well as an exciting traditional *souk*(bazaar) and some stunning long sandy beaches such as Qurum, Bandar Al-Jissah, and Yiti.

Key Facts

Language:

The official language of Oman is Arabic, but English is widely spoken. Hotel staff often also speak German and French.

Passport/Visa:

All visitors (except those with Gulf Co-Operation Council passports) require a visa to enter Oman. Visas can be obtained on arrival; the visa fee must be paid in local currency (OMR) or by credit card. Visitors with valid visas for Dubai and Qatar generally do not need a visa for Oman, but it is best to confirm this with the nearest embassy before travel. A passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the date of arrival is required in most instances, but it is best to check with the nearest embassy before visiting.

Currency:

The currency of Oman is the Omani rial (OMR), divided into 1,000 baisa. Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, exchange bureaux, hotels, and at the airport. Outside banking hours, moneychangers operate in the evenings and at weekends. US dollars are recommended. American Express, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards are readily accepted in large shops and hotels and by an increasing number of traders in souqs. Most banks in cities and towns have ATMs.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. Plugs with rectangular, three-pin flat blades are used.

Travel to Oman

Overview

Oman is a unique destination, offering visitors myriad exclusive attractions. While not typically considered a holiday spot, visitors to Oman will find a rich and sophisticated culture, as well as incredible and varied landscapes.

The eastern region of the Arabian Peninsula is home to superb natural beauty, where sightseers will enjoy exploring the striking beaches, which stretch for miles along the Arabian Sea coastline and provide wonderful swimming spots. There are also wadis (valleys) to explore, turtle-nesting sites to see, as well as the extraordinary desert dunes to discover, and the Al Hajar Mountains are a scenic wonder of stunning canyons, gorges, and plateaus.

A must-see in Oman is the Nizwa Fort, not far from Muscat, which has stood since the 12th century and is the country's most visited tourist attraction. Those wanting a taste of local culture and an authentic shopping experience should visit the Old Mutrah Souk, the most popular traditional bazaar in Muscat.

Known to be a sophisticated travel destination offering the full array of luxuries and modern amenities, Oman also boasts well-preserved ancient traditions and landmarks.

Climate in Oman

The winter months are a delightful time to visit Oman, when the air is clear, the nights are cool, and the daytime temperatures rarely rise above 30C (86F). There is some rain, but any showers are short and sharp.

Visitors are guaranteed warm and dry weather in the autumn and spring months, with temperature averaging in the mid-thirties. The summer months are best avoided, when heat soars to 54C (130F) and the humidity is stifling.

Health Notes when travelling to Oman

A yellow fever vaccination is required for travellers who have arrived from or transited through infected countries; all eligible travellers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, as well as all routine vaccinations. Travellers should avoid mosquito bites, as dengue fever may be a risk, and there is a small risk of malaria in remote areas. Brucellosis is reported, particularly in the south of the country.

Health and medical services in the country, particularly Muscat, are of a high standard, though treatment is expensive for foreigners at these facilities. Health insurance is recommended. Food and water in Muscat is considered safe, but bottled water and precautions with unpasteurised milk are advised outside of the city.

Safety Notes when travelling to Oman

Like all the Gulf States, Oman is considered to be under a high risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, particularly against Western interests, so vigilance is necessary. The crime rate is low, but common sense precautions should be practised. Piracy is considered a threat in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Women are advised not to wear shorts or scanty clothing in the towns to avoid risk of sexual harassment. It is advised that travellers carry a copy of their passport at all times.

Customs in Oman

Oman is a predominantly Muslim country and visitors should respect religious sensitivity, particularly in the matter of dress and public conduct. Women, in particular, should wear loose fitting clothes that cover most of the body. Eating, drinking, and smoking in public during the holy month of Ramadan should be avoided, as it is forbidden by the Muslim culture.

Homosexuality is sadly illegal in the country. Importing obscene publications or videos is subject to severe penalties. Alcohol is available only at licensed hotels and restaurants and penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol are drastic. The legal blood alcohol level in the country is close to zero.

Duty Free in Oman

Travellers to Oman who are over the age of 21 do not have to pay duty on 400 cigarettes and 2 litres of wine and 48 cans of beer, provided they are non-Muslim visitors. Meat products officially require an Islamic slaughter certificate. Prohibited items include firearms, ammunition, weapons, fireworks, raw or prepared opium, leaves, flowers, seeds and stems of cannabis, and obscene reading material.

Doing Business in Oman

The business world in Oman is minute, with a small core of families controlling most of the country's industry and trade. As in most of the Middle East, it is preferable to conduct business face to face and develop good working relations built on trust and friendship. Hospitality is important and visitors will be treated with respect.

It is a good idea to have a basic idea of Omani customs and attempting to speak some Arabic will be appreciated. Business attire is usually formal with suits and ties the norm. Women in particular should dress modestly. English is spoken widely. The working week is normally from Sunday to Thursday, and hours can vary. Most businesses are open from 8am to 1pm and 4pm to 7pm.

Communication in Oman

The international direct dialling code for Oman is +968, and the outgoing international code 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the UK). Local SIM cards are widely available, and free WiFi is available in most hotels and some restaurants.

Tipping in Oman

A service charge is usually added to bills, though a tip of around 10 percent is appreciated.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

A passport valid for six months from the date of arrival is required for US travellers. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

A passport valid for six months beyond the date of arrival is required for Canadian visitors. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

A passport valid for six months from the date of arrival is required for UK travellers. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for Australians:

A passport valid for six months from the date of arrival is required for Australian visitors. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

A passport valid for six months beyond the date of arrival is required for Irish visitors. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

A passport valid for six months beyond the date of arrival is required for visitors from New Zealand. A visa is not required for stays of up to a maximum of three months.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

A passport valid for six months beyond the date of arrival is required for South African visitors. A visa is required.

Tourist Offices

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism: mht.gov.om

Oman Embassies

In the United States:

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Canada): +1 202 387 1980.

In the United Kingdom:

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Ireland): +44 (0)20 7225 0001, +44 (1)71 225 0001.

In Australia:

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, Tokyo, Japan (also responsible for Australia and New Zealand): +81 (0)3 5468 1088.

In New Zealand:

Consulate of the Sultanate of Oman, Auckland, New Zealand: +64 (0)9 522 4426.

In South Africa:

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 632 8301.

Foreign Embassies in Oman

American Embassy

United States Embassy, Muscat: +968 246 43400.

Canadian Embassy

Canadian Consulate, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: +966 1 488 2288.

British Embassy

British Embassy, Muscat: +968 246 09000.

Australian Embassy

Australian Embassy, Riyadh, Saudi Arabi: +966 (0)1 488 7788.

Irish Embassy

Irish Honorary Consul, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: +966 11 488 2300.

New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand Consulate, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: +966 1 488 7988.

South African Embassy

South African Embassy, Muscat: +968 2464 7300.

Currency

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Exchange rate for 1 OMR - Omani Rial

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| nan BMD Bermudan Dollar | inf EUR Euro | inf USD U.S. Dollar | inf GBP U.K. Pound Sterling | inf JPY Japanese Yen | inf CAD Canadian Dollar |
| inf CHF Swiss Franc | inf AUD Australian Dollar | inf UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia | inf KZT Kazakhstani Tenge | inf LBP Lebanese Pound | inf LYD Libyan Dinar |
| inf BOB Bolivian Boliviano | nan NPR Nepalese Rupee | nan QAR Qatari Rial | inf SGD Singapore Dollar | inf SEK Swedish Krona | nan TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar |
| nan VEF Venezuelan Bolivar | inf DOP Dominican Peso | nan HRK Croatian Kuna | inf MXN Mexican Peso | inf XOF West African CFA Franc | nan PGK Papua New Guinean kina |
| nan BSD Bahamian Dollar | nan FJD Fiji Dollar | nan HNL Honduran Lempira | inf DZD Algerian Dinar | nan MMK Myanma Kyat | nan BWP Botswana Pula |
| inf PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol | inf CLP Chilean Peso | inf AMD Armenia Dram | inf CZK Czech Koruna | inf MDL Moldova Lei | inf ISK Icelandic Krona |
| inf UZS Uzbekistan Sum | inf ILS Israeli New Sheqel | inf JOD Jordanian Dinar | nan KWD Kuwaiti Dinar | inf UYU Uruguayan Peso | nan MUR Mauritian Rupee |
| nan NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba | inf NOK Norwegian Krone | inf PLN Polish Zloty | inf SAR Saudi Riyal | nan LKR Sri Lanka Rupee | inf THB Thai Baht |
| inf AED U.A.E Dirham | inf BRL Brazilian Real | inf RON Romanian New Leu | inf HKD Hong Kong Dollar | inf XAF Central African CFA Franc | inf VND Vietnamese Dong |
| inf ARS Argentine Peso | nan XCD East Caribbean Dollar | nan GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal | inf MAD Moroccan Dirham | nan BHD Bahrain Dinar | inf PAB Panamanian Balboa |
| inf AZN Azerbaijan Manat | inf COP Colombian Peso | inf KGS Kyrgyzstan Som | inf HUF Hungarian Forint | inf TJS Tajikistan Ruble | inf IDR Indonesian Rupiah |
| inf EGP Egyptian Pound | inf KRW South Korean Won | inf PYG Paraguayan Guaraní | inf MYR Malaysian Ringgit | inf CRC Costa Rican Colón | inf NZD New Zealand Dollar |
| inf PKR Pakistani Rupee | inf RUB Russian Rouble | inf ZAR South African Rand | inf TND Tunisian Dinar | nan BBD Barbadian Dollar | inf BGN Bulgarian Lev |
| inf TRY Turkish Lira | inf PHP Philippine Peso | inf TWD New Taiwan Dollar | inf NGN Nigerian Naira | nan XPF CFP Franc | nan GHS Ghanaian Cedi |
| nan JMD Jamaican Dollar | nan ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder | nan BND Brunei Dollar | inf RSD Serbian Dinar | inf CNY Chinese Yuan | inf DKK Danish Krone |
| inf TMT New Turkmenistan Manat | inf INR Indian Rupee | | | | |

Overview of the Attractions in Oman

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Public Holidays in Oman

| | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Milad un Nabi (Prophet's Birthday) | Fri. September 27 | Sun. September 15 |
| New Year's Day | Mon. January 1 | Mon. January 1 |
| Lailat al Miraj (Ascension of the Prophet) | Sun. February 18 to Mon. February 19 | Tue. February 6 to Wed. February 7 |
| Renaissance Day | Tue. July 23 | Tue. July 23 |
| Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan) | Sun. April 21 to Mon. April 22 | Tue. April 9 to Wed. April 10 |
| Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) | Fri. June 28 to Tue. July 2 | Sun. June 16 to Thu. June 20 |
| Muharram (Islamic New Year) | Fri. July 19 | Sun. July 7 |
| National Holiday | Mon. November 18 | Mon. November 18 |