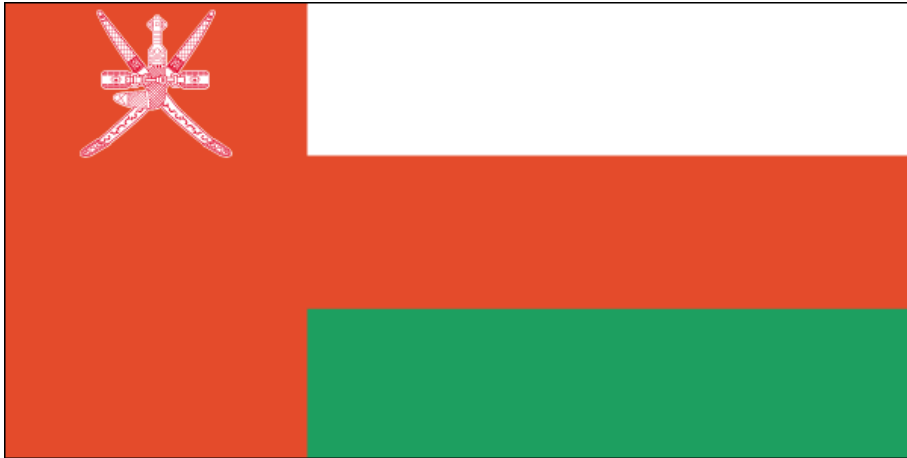


Oman

عمان



NAME:	Sultanate of Oman
CAPITAL:	Muscat
LANGUAGE:	Arabic
RELIGION:	Muslim
CURRENCY:	Rials

Getting Started

When to Visit

There are very few tourists in [Oman](#) at any time of the year so there is no busy season, however there are also no true tourist sites outside the geography and the culture itself so the best time to visit is during the cooler winter months.

[Oman](#) is hot year round (80-110° F (25-45° C)), but the cooler winter months of November to early March are slightly more tolerable. The south, around Dhofar also gets a fair amount of rain from June to late August.

Another thing to consider before planning your trip is that travel plans can be disrupted if you haven't booked ahead during local holidays, especially during Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar). This month also tends to close shops, restaurants, and coffee shops.

Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit weather websites like [weather.com](#); many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

Tours & Cruises

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

For more travel information & destinations, visit [www.SafariTheGlobe.com](#)

[Celebrity Cruises](#): High end cruise line catered to adults who enjoy the luxury treatment celebrities enjoy.

[Costa Cruises](#): Costa makes an effort to cater to all styles of cruisers, so you should be able to find a cruise that fits your interests.

[Intrepid Travel](#): Boasts more "off the beaten track" destinations; do your research though since some tours are very adventurous and involves camping and local hotels.

[Oceania Cruises](#): Oceania boasts "intimate and luxurious ships" with an emphasis on service and luxury.

[Royal Caribbean](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

[Oman Tourism](#): As a slowly developing tourist destination, Oman's official Ministry of Tourism is a good place to find new tour options.

Guidebooks

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with [Oman](#), you may not need anything more than this guide! However, if you need more detailed and up to date information, there are a number of great country-wide, region-wide, and city-wide guidebooks available for travel in Oman.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[Rough Guides](#): Cover various aspects of travel from culture to getting by on the cheap.

Culture

Personality, Culture, & Identity

[Oman](#) is overshadowed and forgotten, but beyond the bright lights of the other gulf coast counties, Oman strikes a balance between modernization and culture, past and present. For centuries, the backwaters of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman has quietly caught up to his more glitzy brothers but refuses to flaunt this progress.

Never clinging to the past, [Omanis](#) recognize their history from a powerful empire controlling the Indian Ocean's and Arabian Peninsula's trade to their oceanic defeats and slip into poverty. Today Oman neither boasts about their frankincense past, nor do they deny or complain about their failure to progress for nearly a century. Oman acts with the wisdom of an old sage who learned from his victories and defeats, but focuses only on today and the future. He has struck a perfect balance between modernization and history.

Omanis proudly wear their "national dress" and can be spotted throughout Arabia, yet they see life as being "Omani" simple as is. [Oman](#) has been influenced by others and others have influenced Oman, making the people open to different views and opinions, making them welcoming and inquisitive, yet they don't seek change, but rather listen intently as they remain confident in who they are.

History

[Oman](#)'s history is often divided into two or three distinct times: the ancient times dating back to nearly 5000 BC, the 1700 and 1800s, then today, beginning with about 1970. Today, the Omanis proudly claim they are in the middle of a "Renaissance," and due to their long and powerful past, this phrase is well deserved.

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[Oman](#)'s southern coast, near modern-day Dhofar is home to the highly sought after frankincense, but the region also had gold, making historic Oman one of the richest areas in the entire Middle East, if not the world. The frankincense, which can only be found in a couple places, but none with as high of quality as Dhofar, became the draw from everywhere in the ancient Middle East as it was a highly sought after trading material, linking Oman with [India](#), the Arabian Peninsula, and the rest of the world.

Frankincense gained fame in the west as being one of the gifts from the three kings. Plus, the gold cities of the Bible were also located in [Oman](#), which justifiably gave Oman its reputation as a rich and prosperous land. Unfortunately, to have a revival, first there must be a downturn and Oman's first began at about year 0 until a little after the introduction of Islam to the region.

In about 1000 to 1500 [Oman](#) made a resurgence by controlling the Indian Ocean and the trading routes from [Africa](#), Arabia, and [India](#). This resurgence was short-lived however and in the 1500s the Portuguese gained control over these same trade routes by successfully attacking Oman's coasts and ships. Portuguese rule over Oman lasted until 1624.

In the 1800s, [Oman](#) regained influence over the seas and moved their capital to the island of Zanzibar (off the coast of modern-day [Tanzania](#)), making parts of the East African coast colonies. By the late 1800s however, the Omani empire had divided between Oman itself and the African colonies. Near the same time the [British](#) arrived in the Persian Gulf and tried to end Oman's control over trade.

Although the [British](#) never turned [Oman](#) into a colony, the country was essentially under British control during much of the 1900s. During this time Oman was essentially divided into two areas: the coast and the interior. The latter filled with nomads and desert, while the prior was based on trade and the seas. These two groups warred with each other as the coasts were dominated by the Sultan and the interior sought freedom and the open desert, which was the traditional life they had

lived for centuries. Despite eventually uniting the country, civil unrest continued as Oman isolated itself from the rest of the world during much of the 1900s; education rates stagnated, and healthcare lagged behind international standards.

In 1970 Qaboos, the Sultan's son took power in a bloodless coup. At the time [Oman](#) only had two primary schools, no secondary schools, two hospitals (run by American missions), and only 10 kilometers of sealed roads. This uphill battle for Sultan Qaboos was successfully overcome as today, Oman rightfully boasts one of the world's best road networks, increasing literacy and education rates, and improving healthcare.

Despite the modernization since 1970, [Oman](#) looks and feels nothing like it's neighboring Gulf coast countries. Omani traditions and culture have not only remained, but have been embraced and flourish under the country's educational system. Additionally, Sultan Qaboos and his ministers annually go out among the people to request their suggestions, ideas, and needs so they can continue to improve their country. Some of these requests even being fulfilled before the Sultan's departure from the town or village he visits.

Dress & Behavior

As a Muslim country, there are a number of religious laws which should be obeyed by everyone in [Oman](#), including tourists. Oman receives very few tourists and not following Islamic laws is considered rude and inappropriate, although the local people are generally too kind to point out your lack of respect.

Women should cover their hair at all times in public and both women and men are expected to cover their legs and shoulders; showing your knees and/or shoulders is very offensive. Even 3/4 length pants, like Capris and short sleeve shirts should be avoided, although there is some leniency to the short sleeve shirts. Some all-inclusive resorts that cater to tourists relax these regulations on their private beaches, however everywhere else you must cover up.

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Adult women are best off traveling to [Oman](#) with their husband or family. Single women travelers are looked at oddly and traveling with a man who is not related or married to you is considered wrong. Pretending you are married is not right, but is less offensive than a single man and women traveling together. It is also improper to touch a woman, even holding your wife's hand or offering to shake a local woman's hand can be considered inappropriate.

Islamic law forbids pork products and alcohol and these must be avoided. Although some high end hotels may offer alcohol in their restaurants, pork is nearly impossible to find and consuming either is extremely offensive. To learn more about dining etiquette in [Oman](#), continue reading the section below.

Food

Dinning Etiquette

If you happen to stumble upon gracious [Omani](#) hosts who invite you in at a moment's notice, it is polite to accept as the occasion will be fairly informal and they'll probably have dates, fruit, coffee and/or *laban* for you. If you get invited over for a later date and time be prepared for your hosts to go above and beyond for you.

After you arrive to the restaurant or your host's (and be on time) you may encounter a number of situations so be prepared to follow your host's lead and direction. As a Muslim country, and more importantly, with various degrees of orthodoxy, dining rules vary greatly. Conservative Muslim families will require that men eat separate from women and children and some may even insist that their guests eat before they do. In more liberal families everyone might dine together and at the same time.

Once the dining guidelines have been established there are a few rules that everyone must follow in [Oman](#). First, the obvious, in a Muslim country never eat or ask for pork products or alcohol; both are forbidden and even liberal Muslims in Oman follow these rules. Also common in many Middle Eastern countries, don't cross your legs or put your feet up in a way that the soles of your feet could be facing another person; this is very offensive and rude. Finally, a couple actions that may seem innocent, like placing objects on the table (like a purse or briefcase) and touching your hair or hat, are not allowed. Both are considered unclean and touching or placing these objects on the table is inconsiderate.

Once eating only use your right hand to eat and take minimal quantities for your first serving. You will most likely be offered food for seconds and even thirds, but don't ask for more since this is inappropriate.

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Finally, remember that the person who initiated the dinner (if at a restaurant) is expected to pay, but always offer to contribute. Or if dining in a local's home send a hand written thank you note for their hospitality.

History & Influences

The historic [Omani](#) diet consisted of little more than dates and camel's milk, plus seafood along the coast. This was particularly true in the desert where the Bedouin had little more than this available. While some meats were eaten, they were consumed in small quantities and pork is never consumed since it is forbidden according to Islamic Law (and most Omani are Muslim).

In the 1800s and 1900s, with advanced communication, transportation, and most importantly, with the discovery of oil, much of the nomadic lifestyle collapsed as people fled to the cities. In conjunction with this migration the coastal cities were greatly influenced by outsiders as Levantine food altered the cuisine. Today much of [Oman's](#) food is similar to Levantine food in the case of garlic, onions, lemon/lime, grilled meats, and fresh fruits & vegetables. Plus, with trade, spices have been introduced, primarily from India.

Staple Foods

Rice - popular and served with many dishes, but definitely not served with every meal

Bread - there are multiple varieties of bread, but the most common are thin breads, like *lavash*

Meat - there tends to be a meat in most dishes; chicken, lamb, mutton, and fish are the most popular, while pork is forbidden

Regional Varieties & Specialties

Shuwa - the national dish is only eaten on extremely festive occasions, because the work needed to make it requires a village. After seasoning an entire cow or goat the animal is cooked in an

underground oven and served to all who are present in the town or village.

Drinks

The most traditional beverages in [Oman](#) are *laban*, which is a salty buttermilk drink, and *khawa*, which is Oman's version of coffee, which tends to be fairly strong.

As a primarily Muslim country alcohol is not consumed in [Oman](#) and is not allowed, by law, to be consumed.

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Practical Information

Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter [Oman](#), however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please [Find Your Nearest Omani Embassy](#).

Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including [Oman](#). Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, Oman didn't have any health immunizations that are required prior to arrival, although a number of immunizations are strongly recommended.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to [Oman](#), then with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

Largest International Airlines: [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

Largest Omani Airline: [Oman Air](#).

Largest Rental Car Agencies in Oman: [Avis](#); [Budget](#); [Europcar](#); [Hertz](#); [Thrifty](#).

Flight & Rental Car Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

Popular International Hotel Conglomerates: [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

Hotel Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Hostels: Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](#), [hostelworld.com](#), & [hostelbookers.com](#).

Camping: Camp sites in Oman are sparse at best and non-existent at the worst. Camping is best avoided in most parts of the country, although many organized tours offer desert camping.

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Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

[Oman](#) is on a curious time schedule, perhaps to beat the mid-day heat. Most locations, both local and tourist open at about 8:00-9:00 am then close at about noon for 2-3 hours, at which point they reopen from about 4:00-5:00 pm until 7:00-9:00 pm. As a Muslim country, Oman's weekend falls on Thursday and Friday, which alters opening hours on these days, while Saturdays and Sundays are regular working days.

The one time of the year that shops and restaurants are closed more often than not is during Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar), when fasting is required from sunrise to sunset. Due to this Islamic requirement, most shops close down and it can be difficult to find an open restaurant anywhere outside major hotels catering to tourists.

[Oman](#) is not used to tourists and prices have not yet jumped to take advantage of the tourist industry, which is slowly growing in Oman. However, Oman also has few options for the traveler so prices can be very high. If you arrive at the airport, you'll notice the high taxi costs and once you get into town hotel costs are equally high. Even cheap hostels will begin (in the cities) at about 10 rials (\$25-30) a night, but there are few low to mid-range hotel options in Oman. Most high end hotels average about 120 rials (\$310) a night. Food is fairly reasonable priced though; most restaurants only cost 1-5 rials (\$2.50-\$12) and the nicest restaurants rarely cost more than 15 rials (\$40) a person.

Tipping is not common in [Oman](#). Nicer restaurants and hotels will expect a little extra money for dinner or bag handling services, however elsewhere it is not commonly seen. Leaving your excess change after a meal is a polite, but an unnecessary and at times confusing gesture.

Crime & Safety

[Oman](#) is a very safe destination. The country has managed to escape some of the dangers its neighbor Yemen faces and Oman has been a

very politically, economically, and socially stable country for well over three decades. The biggest threat to any visitor is on the roads. Despite the country's incredible infrastructure and perhaps the best road system in the world, driving is still a concern. With mountainous terrain, deserts, occasional fog in the south, tailgaters, and the occasional animal wandering into the road, driving is your biggest threat.

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