

## Mountains & Deserts of Oman

Discover rugged mountain scenery, dramatic desert forts and welcoming Bedouin culture on this superb walking and trekking holiday.



### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouse, Bedouin Camp
Grade	Moderate
Duration	9 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 6 days
Min/Max group size	6 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 6
Trip Leader	Local Leader Oman
Land only	Joining in Muscat, Oman
Max altitude	2,050m/6,726ft, day 4

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2019 Dates:

Fri 01 Nov - Sun 10 Nov\*

### 2020 Dates:

Fri 06 Mar - Sun 15 Mar

\*This detailed, day by day itinerary only applies to our November 2019 departure. An itinerary for our 2020 departure can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Mountain Kingdoms office.

### Deposit and payments

A deposit of £1,090 per person is required to secure your booking on this holiday. For full details please refer to our terms and conditions on our website: <http://www.mountainkingdoms.com/essential-information> or contact us for a postal copy.

### Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

### No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

### Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 6 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

### Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

### Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

### Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts, who will have first-hand experience of the destination/s you want to visit. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

## Your guide

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Throughout the trip you will be accompanied by a professionally trained English-speaking guide, who will have a large fund of knowledge regarding the history and culture of the country. You will be able to trek with just your day sack.

## Your trip highlights

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- Discover the sights of Muscat with a picturesque walk to Muttrah Souk and a ride on a traditional dhow
- Enjoy varied walks amidst beautiful desert scenery including Wadi Bani Kahlid
- Walk across the magnificent dunes of the Wahiba Sands
- Visit Oman's Grand Canyon and the idyllic village of Misfah

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2	Fly to Muscat. Walk to Muttrah and visit the souk.
Day 3	Drive to Nizwa. Visit fort and souq. Drive to ruined village of Tanuf and walk in the wadi.
Day 4	Full day walk to Misfah.
Day 5	Drive to Jebel Shams and see Oman's Grand Canyon - Wadi Al Nahkhar. Walk to the village of As Sab.
Day 6	Drive to Wahiba Sands. Dune bashing and sunset dune walk.
Day 7	Desert walk with Bedouin guide. Walk in Wadi Bani Khalid.
Day 8	Drive to Wadi Shab. Walk and swim in Wadi. Drive to Muscat via Wadi Tiwi.
Day 9	Sightseeing tour of Muscat including the Grand Mosque. Trip on a traditional dhow.
Day 10	Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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Oman is a country blessed by wonderfully varied and spectacular landscapes of mountain, desert and coast. Here are rugged mountains that rise to over 3,000m/10,000ft cut by awesome canyons and gorges, desert landscapes of rolling honey-coloured sand dunes and 1,700 kilometres of beautiful coastline.

It is only in recent years under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said that Oman has emerged from a self-imposed isolation and opened up to tourism making it one of the undiscovered jewels of Arabia. A visit to this fascinating country will leave you with many unforgettable images: wide landscapes of rugged mountains and gorges stretching into the distance; ancient mountain villages clinging to cliff sides or nestling in remote and spectacular wadis; lush oases of swaying date palms fed by ancient irrigation canals; and Bedouin tribesmen leading their camels over desert dunes. These landscapes are dominated by many impressive sand coloured forts and smaller watch towers - evidence of Oman's warlike past. There will be other less dramatic images too: the unfailingly friendly welcome of the people and the courteous traditional offering to visitors of Arabic coffee and dates whether in mountain village or simple Bedouin tent, amazing star filled skies, palm fringed pools in deep canyons and the peace and tranquillity of wild and remote mountains with just the sound of the wind for company.

Oman is the oldest independent state in the Arab world and is one of the more traditional countries in the Gulf region. At one time Oman had its own empire, which at its peak in the 19th century stretched down the east African coast with its capital in Zanzibar, and vied with Portugal and Britain for influence in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. The country was famous for its seafaring prowess with dhows trading with Africa and India and beyond - Sinbad the Sailor is said to have come from Oman. Nowadays although opening up to tourism Oman is doing so with sensitivity and imagination. Omani people value their culture and history and are working to preserve it. At the same time Oman is the most laid back of the Gulf States. While preserving their Islamic traditions Omanis are tolerant and friendly and welcome tourists to their country especially those who appreciate their country and its traditions and respect its Islamic culture.

The mountains of Oman are very rugged and the trekking, while not overly strenuous, is graded moderate because the going can be very rough underfoot. The predominant rock is limestone and while some trails are way-marked, paths may not be well defined and will often be over loose scree, rocks and limestone pavement with occasional steep ascents and descents. The going can be a little unforgiving with sharp rocks and prickly thorn bushes! Occasionally paths are somewhat 'airy', which while giving tremendous views over dramatic canyons or gorges, may not be suitable for sufferers from vertigo!

## Special notes

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights.

If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to Muscat

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Depart London for the flight to Muscat, capital of Oman.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Muscat. Group transfer to hotel. Morning at leisure. Afternoon walk from Riyam to Muttrah - 2 hours.

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Arrive early morning in Muscat and after getting your visa and passing through immigration, transfer to your hotel. Check into your room and rest for a few hours to recover from the flight. Your hotel has a swimming pool and terrace where you may relax.

Muscat is a clean, well maintained and prosperous City. Its modern white buildings are attractive and relatively low rise in contrast to those in many cities of the Gulf region and the city is green and flowery - date palms, grass lawns and bougainvillea line the main roads providing a welcome contrast to the dun coloured, rocky crags that reach right down into the centre of the town. The city itself stretches in a long ribbon along the mainly north facing coast and orientation can be confusing. The International Airport lies to the west and the old city and port and the commercial centre of Ruwi are east of the airport. Newer suburbs lie further east, so distances between various parts of the city can be quite long, but roads are good and travel is quick and easy.

Today, you will probably be tired after your flight, so rather than rush you out to do sightseeing on your first morning (the Grand Mosque is only open till 11am) we have saved your main sightseeing until you return to Muscat.

Instead, after lunch you will drive down to the area known as Riyam to do a very pretty walk from there, following an old trail over the hill to Muttrah. You climb 150 metres on steps to a fantastic viewpoint over the coast and sea. As you climb, you will see behind you, a white monument on the hill depicting an incense burner, reflecting the importance of frankincense in Oman's history. Reaching the top and admiring the views, you then descend into a wadi to an abandoned settlement where you can see the remains of houses and fields and falaj - the old irrigation system. The villagers planted trees, some of which still remain, to attract honey bees. You then descend an ill defined path down a very pretty wadi, following beside the waters of a small stream - watch your feet here as the rocks can get slippery. It seems so isolated and quiet that you can hardly believe that you are in the middle of a large city! Finally, you make a short climb out of the wadi before descending past a cemetery to walk the short distance into Muttrah. Turn left and you arrive at the harbour with its bobbing dhows and then come to famous Muttrah Souk. Before exploring the souk you might like to stop at one of the small cafes in front of the souk for a delicious fruit juice cocktail.

By the time you arrive Muttrah Souk, the oldest in Oman, will be coming alive for the evening. The souk is a labyrinth of stalls and shops selling everything from brass lions, ceramics, ready made clothes and silk to dried fruit and nuts. The aroma of spices and incense fills the air. You can even find frankincense for sale - this has long been one of Oman's most famous exports. The souk is a very lively and busy place and a little gentle haggling is expected, although in any case goods here are not expensive.

Once you have finished exploring the many delights of the souk you will enjoy a welcome dinner before returning to your hotel.

**Overnight: Hotel Al Falaj or Similar, Muscat**

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**Day 3: Drive to Nizwa via Birkat Al Mauz. Visit the fort and souq at Nizwa. Drive to Tanuf, visit the ruins of the old village and walk in the surrounding wadi.**

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Today you travel to Nizwa, a drive of around 1½ hours but with a stop en route at the charming village of Birkat Al Mauz. Shaded date plantations are overlooked by the ruins of the village of Birkat, which was evacuated during the Jebel wars. Here you take a short walk along the afalaj, which is incorporated into the UNESCO World Heritage Site of 'Afalaj Irrigation Systems of Oman', which consists of five afalaj systems that are representative of some 3,000 systems still in use in Oman and which are believed to have been used in agriculture and farming for many centuries.



Having explored the site, you continue to Nizwa. This is a verdant oasis city surrounded by date plantations, with over 40 varieties of date said to be grown in the area. The Falaj Daris bringing water to the city and sustaining its fertility is the largest falaj in the country. The city sits at the foot of the Hajar mountains at an important crossroads leading north to Muscat and south to Dhofar and is considered the cultural capital of Oman.

Nizwa was capital of Oman for many centuries and today the city is still dominated by its sand coloured fort and souk. The fort was built by Imam Sultan bin Saif al Yaarubi and completed in 1668 AD. The walls are rounded and robust, designed to withstand fierce barrages of mortar fire. The most striking feature of the fort is the massive central tower - a colossal round tower soaring 35m/115ft above the rest of the fortification and filled with earth and stones for half its height making it all but impregnable. Two cannons guard the entrance to the fort which opens into a veritable maze of rooms, high-ceilinged halls, doorways, terraces, narrow staircases and corridors. The tower has battlements, turrets, secret shafts, false doors and wells. Access to the top is only by means of a narrow, meandering staircase barred by a heavy wooden door studded with metal spikes. Those who did manage to run the gauntlet of hurdles risked being scalded by boiling oil or water that was poured through shafts which opened directly above each set of doors. Boiling date syrup, a liquid that oozed from bags of dates stored in special date cellars, sometimes came in handy as an alternative to boiling oil or water.

Nizwa Souk, next to the fort, is an important commercial market with lots of noise and haggling - various sections are devoted to different items for sale, foodstuffs, animals such as goats and cows, fruit and vegetable, meat and fish. The souk was beautifully renovated in the 1990s and although the areas selling handicrafts may seem rather sanitised, the airy fruit and vegetable market is impressive and the whole area still has many fascinating and characterful hidden corners.

In the afternoon, you will make the short drive out of Nizwa to the ruined village of Tanuf. Partly destroyed by bombing raids in the 1950s, the atmospheric old ruins of Tanuf sit at above a deep wadi and you will still find that the original faluj (water channel) runs through the village. Once you've wandered through this 'ghost town' you will head to the wadi which provides some delightful scenery for a good walk. Afterwards, you return to Nizwa for the night.

**Overnight: Hotel Falaj Daris or Similar, Nizwa (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 4: Drive to the mountains near Hamra. Walk from Sharaf al Alamayn, 2,050m/6,726ft, to Misfah - 7 hours.**

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From Nizwa you will drive to the town of al Hamra with its many fine old houses and take a dirt road 25km up into the mountains. After a drive of about 30 minutes you arrive at the ridge top at Sharaf al Alamayn where you will start your walk. The views from here over the Western Hajar Mountains are just stupendous. Looking down you can see several villages far below you, including the picturesque village of Balat Sayt and smaller Hat and beyond is the spectacular gorge of Wadi Bani Awf, one of the largest wadis in Oman. This is a stunning and remote place although it may be a little cool and breezy - one of the few times in Oman when you may break out your fleece.

From Sharaf al Alamayn you follow the airy ridge top enjoying tremendous views over the mountains and wadis on the northern side of the Western Hajar Mountains, especially spectacular Wadi Bani Awf. The route is way-marked with paint flashes but in places the path will be rocky and rough underfoot. After a couple of hours you will see where the challenging route up the cliffs from the village of Balad Sayt joins from the right. From this point you will be on a more established and maintained donkey trail all the way to Misfah. You descend past a Bedouin encampment at Hayl al Jawari and then descend more steeply in a gorge all the way back to the picturesque village of Misfah.

**Overnight: Misfah Guesthouse (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 5: Explore Misfah. Drive to Jabal Shams visiting Ghul Village en route. Continue to Oman's Grand Canyon and then on to Al Khitayam for an afternoon walk - 4 hours.**

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To begin the day you visit Misfah, a medieval village built into a rockface 10km up a winding track from Hamra. The narrow streets of the village are lined with tall houses and at the end of the village the local women come to wash their clothes and dishes in the water pools.

From Misfah you continue to the abandoned village of Ghul set on a rocky outcrop. You can clamber through the overgrown streets and houses and, if there's time, you can reach the top of the outcrop where you will find the remains of an old fort and enjoy expansive views of the surrounding wadi and mountains. You then drive to the Jabal Shams Mountains, eventually arriving at a plateau on the western edge of the Wadi An Nakhar; Oman's 'Grand Canyon'. The panoramic views over the gorge from this edge are tremendously impressive with the floor of the gorge visible some 1,500m/4,922ft below you. After a lunch break you drive a little further to Al Khitayam and walk from there to another abandoned village - As Sab - then return to Al Khitayam. This will be a round walk of approximately 4 hours.

**Overnight: Jebel Shams Resort (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 6: Drive to Bedouin encampment in the Wahiba Sands. Dune bashing and sunset walk.**

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This morning you will drive to the Wahiba Sands Desert, travelling long the edge of the desert to the small town of Al Wasil. From here you will turn off into the desert to reach a Bedouin encampment among the dunes. This is your delightful accommodation for the night.

In the afternoon you will have the opportunity to try a little 'dune bashing' - a thrilling experience driving up and down the impressive sand dunes at speed in a 4x4. For a more sedate way to experience the dunes, you will enjoy a sunset walk, watching the colour of the sands change and glow as the sun goes slowly down and the stars gradually appear in the vast open skies.

Accommodation at the Desert Camp will be in simple Bedouin huts with shared showers and toilets. Meals will be taken Bedouin style, sitting on cushions and you will be able to relax in the shady sitting area, or in the evening around a campfire under the stars. This is a very friendly place, full of Bedouin character. In the spirit of Arab hospitality you will be offered local dates and kahwa - Omani black coffee, flavoured with cardamom and served in tiny cups. Such hospitality is very much a feature of a visit to Oman. Normally any visit starts with coffee and dates being offered and it is considered bad manners to refuse - even a souvenir seller may well offer you such hospitality before getting down to the business of selling you something.

### **The Wahiba Sands**

The Wahiba Sands have been described as a 'perfect specimen of a sand sea'. Although fairly small in size, stretching just 180km from north to south and 80km from east to west, this is a true dramatic rolling-sand desert with dunes reaching 150m high. The dunes vary in colour from deep red to a rich honey colour and stretch as far as the eye can see, flowing in corridors from north to south. The Wahiba Sands are considered important because they contain such varied terrain within a small area and in 1986 the Royal Geographical Society made an expedition to the Sands discovering a surprising number of plants, mammals, birds and other wildlife there. They are also the traditional home of the nomadic Bedouin and their animals.

**Overnight: Bedouin Encampment (Meals: BLD)**



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**Day 7: Desert walk with Bedouin guide. Afternoon walk in Wadi Bani Khalid - 2-3 hours.**

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You will have probably awakened to find that the dunes are swathed in dense mist. The rich variety of life in the Wahiba Sands is sustained by these heavy overnight mists. The mist will soon burn off though once the sun rises. In the morning it is fascinating to see evidence of a wide variety of life which exists here. You will see myriad tracks of camels, small mice, dung beetles, snakes and birds criss-crossing what you might at first sight have taken to be a sterile landscape.

As you walk through the dunes, your Bedouin guide will be able to identify all these tracks for you even down to those made by a scorpion. You will see various Bedouin camps along the way and may have the opportunity to visit one - these Bedouin camps are temporary encampments with shelters for camels and other livestock such as cows, goats, chickens and sheep set round about a central living area. The camps although simple are surprisingly comfortable and might have such 'mod cons' as a generator to power electric light and television and also, as in so much of Oman, the ubiquitous satellite dish. There may also be a 4WD parked beside the camp. Bedouin children will probably try to sell you handmade woven items such as bracelets and key-ring tassels made from sheep or goats' wool. These are a way for Bedouin families to make a little additional income and are not expensive and make nice souvenirs. You will walk back to 'the desert camp' by a different route through the dunes in time for a late lunch. It may be possible to rent a camel at the camp to ride into the dunes instead of walking - this will be payable locally.



After lunch you say farewell to your Bedouin hosts and head to Wadi Bani Khalid deep in the Oman mountains and one of the largest and most picturesque wadis in Oman. It has a large enough rain drainage basin that there is water in parts of the wadi all year round. Each year the rocks and boulders are moved by the force of the water after a storm and so each trek in the wadi is slightly different. You begin by walking into the wadi, partly over the Falaj, a traditional Omani irrigation system. Having started early from near the entrance, you will hopefully have beaten the crowds coming from Muscat and surrounding areas. Leaving the more touristic part of the wadi behind, you walk further inside and those interested can have a look at the small and rather dark Muqal cave. As is usual in these kind of wadis the path is likely to be uneven and the going is stone underfoot. There may be some bouldering as well as sections where you will have to pass over (or through) sections of low water, so we would suggest to bring shoes that are comfortable to walk in but that can also get wet. After your walk there is a chance to cool off in one of the water pools before driving to your accommodation for the night situated close to the wadi.

**Overnight: Oriental Night Rest House, Qalhat (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 8: Drive via Qalhat to Wadi Ash Shab. Walk and swim in the wadi. Continue to Wadi Tiwi. Drive to Muscat.**

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After breakfast you drive to Qalhat, a drive of approximately 2 hours. Qalhat was once a great port city but was devastated first by earthquake and then burnt to the ground by Portuguese invaders in the 14th century. The only major building to survive from this once great city is Bait Maryam (the house of Mary) which is in remarkably good condition. Traces of the old harbour can still be found by the sea, and arched tunnels here are the remains of cisterns built in the 13th century.



After a look round you continue your journey on to Wadi ash Shab. Before Cyclone Gonu hit in 2007, this was one of the jewels of Oman, but many of its former plantations and irrigated terraces were damaged by the flood waters that surged down from the mountains above. Even so, it is still a place of great peace and natural beauty and the authorities have worked to restore it to its former glory. Trying to ignore the flyover for the coastal road at the mouth of the wadi, it is a beautiful walk up through the irrigated fields still remaining and beside various beautiful blue pools, to the head of the gorge. Here, a feature of this day's activities is to swim through several pools and then through the blue waters of an extremely narrow gorge (hardly shoulder width) to duck into a peaceful cavern fed by two waterfalls. With its bright blue waters dramatically lit from above this is a very special and peaceful place.

Returning on foot to the road you then drive up nearby Wadi Tiwi, another green and beautiful wadi where waters flow throughout the year and where mangos, bananas and figs as well as the ubiquitous date palms are grown. If you feel like a leg stretch you can walk back down Wadi Tiwi past the various mosques and houses of the villages in the wadi.

Your walk completed, you return to your vehicles and drive back to Muscat.

**Overnight: Hotel Al Falaj Or Similar, Muscat (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 9: Morning sightseeing. Afternoon dhow trip.**

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In the morning, you will have a sightseeing tour of Muscat. First you will visit the Grand Mosque. The mosque, completed in 2001, is an extraordinary building, borrowing architectural features and decoration from Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The elegant simplicity of the exterior archways, decorated arcades and courtyards contrasts with the magnificence of the elaborately decorated interiors. A mere description of the features of the main prayer hall which can accommodate almost 7,000 worshippers, the huge Swarovski chandelier, said to be the largest in the world and the huge Persian carpet which covers the floor, does not do justice to this wonderful example of modern Islamic architecture, which is at once serene and spectacular. (See Trip Dossier for how to dress to visit the mosque).



You will then travel to see Muscat Old Town. The position of the old town was chosen for its harbour and natural defences. The town was so well protected by the craggy mountains that surrounded it that prior to 1929 it was accessible only by footpaths over the hills, or from the sea. The old town walls can still be seen and two old Portuguese forts, Jabalai and Murani, still dominate the town. In 1972, the Sultan's rather quirky al Alam Palace was built on the waterfront and more recently a complex of elegant new government buildings has been constructed which create an attractive modern centre to the old town where it is very pleasant to wander.

The afternoon is spent aboard a traditional dhow and will take in the sunset. Dhows are marked out by their triangular sails and have been plying the seas around the Persian Gulf for centuries, transporting dates and fish.

**Overnight: Hotel Al Falaj Or Similar, Muscat (Meals: B)**

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**Day 10: Group transfer to airport. Fly to London.**

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Today you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back to the UK.

## Our grading system

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Mountains & Deserts of Oman is graded as a Moderate trekking holiday, as described below.

### **Moderate**

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/ 14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

## What the price includes

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Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ A Local English-speaker Leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ A single, timed group airport transfer on arrival and departure
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation (usually 4 star) in Muscat, twin share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Good standard accommodation elsewhere with all meals
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ A free Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece
- ✓ Opportunity to join one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Visa fees
- × Lunch and evening meals in Muscat
- × Optional trips
- × Tips

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

For our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag (these are required for certain treks), there is the choice of receiving either a free Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece. If you are not eligible for a free bottle, you will still be able to buy a special Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



### **Hotel Al Falaj or Similar, Muscat**

The Hotel Al Falaj is a very pleasant, modern hotel located right in the heart of Muscat, in the Ruwi district. It has two good restaurants and an outdoor swimming pool. Rooms are well appointed with all facilities. If the Hotel Al Falaj is unavailable you will stay at the Hotel Ruwi. This is another good hotel also located right in the city with good facilities and offering traditional Omani hospitality.



### **Hotel Falaj Daris or Similar, Nizwa**

This 3\* hotel offers a good standard of accommodation just a couple of miles outside of the historic centre of Nizwa. Rooms have air-conditioning, king sized beds, mini bars and Wi-Fi, whilst the hotel has a pool with poolside bar, a terrace, restaurant, courtyards and gardens.



### **Misfah Guesthouse**

Misfah Guesthouse is situated in the middle of this beautiful village, surrounded by palm trees. It offers twin bedded rooms, all with air conditioning, but with shared facilities.



### **Jebel Shams Resort**

The Jebel Shams Resort has a fabulous location close to the edge of Oman's Grand Canyon. It features 20 comfortable chalets and 15 Arabic tents, a restaurant and a coffee shop. Rooms have all facilities such as wifi and TV but there are also opportunities at the resort to sit by a camp fire and and enjoy stunning, pollution free views of the night sky.



### **Bedouin Encampment**

This is a simple but attractive encampment built in Bedouin style with huts, shared bathroom facilities and very attractive reception areas. The welcome here is warm and the food is excellent.



### **Oriental Nights Rest House, Al Wasil**

This pleasant guesthouse is located on the way to Wadi Bani Khalid. It offers comfortable, spacious accommodation and good food, and the staff are very helpful and friendly.

## Meal arrangements

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Bed and breakfast in Muscat. All meals included elsewhere.

## Flight arrangements

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### Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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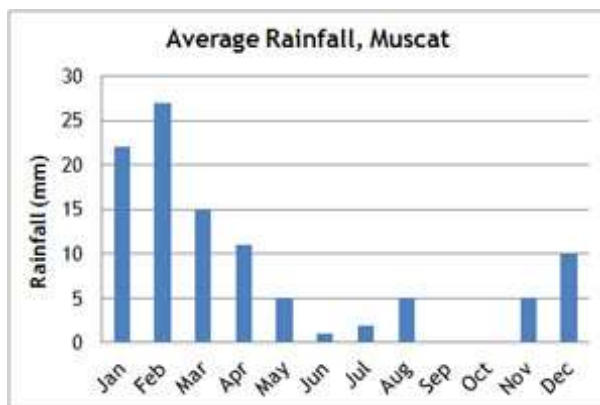
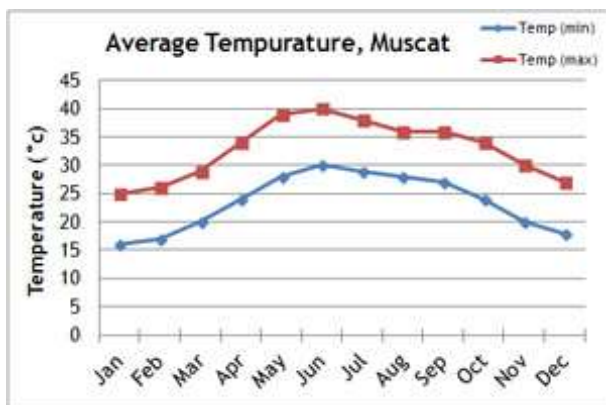
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



# Extensions

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## Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip, arrange a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activities. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.



## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- This specially designed itinerary is unique to Mountain Kingdoms. It offers varied walks, time in the beautiful desert landscape and cultural sightseeing, so that you can experience the very best of Oman.
- We have selected a blend of accommodation including good quality hotels, a welcoming guesthouse and a desert encampment.
- We have a maximum group size of 12 to ensure all the benefits of genuine small group travel without the negative impact often associated with large groups.
- Your holiday will be led by a professional, English-speaking guide who will be delighted to share their expert knowledge of the history, culture and nature of their home country.
- We have a wealth of travel experience at Mountain Kingdoms with a team of friendly and knowledgeable travel experts. If you have any questions about any aspect of this holiday please don't hesitate to give us a call on 01453 844400 or email [info@mountainkingdoms.com](mailto:info@mountainkingdoms.com).
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and other exciting activities.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

## What our clients say

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*What made this holiday special was being with our 5 Omani guys. Their hospitality, humour and meeting their families all gave us a far better insight to Omani life than we could get with a European Leader.*  
-Mr & Mr C, Southampton

*Our guide was excellent, the whole trip hinged on him and his trek staff who did us proud.*  
-Mrs S, Wiltshire



*Excellent knowledge and interesting. Hard working and very good company.*  
-Mrs H, Dorset

*Quality of information, efficiency of service provided all excellent. Good value for money and an excellent holiday all round.*  
-Mr S, London



# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.

# Mountain Kingdoms & Responsible Tourism

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## Our commitment

Mountain Kingdoms is committed to responsible tourism, through policies and practices which permeate all aspects of its business. Our policies aim to ensure that we and our clients act in a way which is socially, environmentally and culturally sound. We feel strongly that all Mountain Kingdoms holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment by minimising pollution, and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. We tread lightly - low volume, low impact trekking/touring is the best way of preserving the beautiful and fragile places we visit.

We work with organisations such as Tourism Concern, International Porter Protection Group (IPPG), Ecoan, AITO and various charities, to help achieve our responsible tourism goals.

## Our initiatives

We support a range of projects around the world both on an ongoing basis and in response to disasters and emergencies.

Examples of our recent ongoing work are the Kerala Partnership helping flood victims in southern India, the Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service in Ethiopia, the Ginette Harrison School in Nepal, a tree planting project in Peru, the Village Education Project in Kilimanjaro and Kidasha charity supporting children in crisis in Nepal, and many more.



If you know of a registered charity that does good 'hands on' work in a country that we operate in please send us details and we will consider adding it to the list of charities we support.

Further details of all our Responsible Tourism initiatives can be found at [www.mountainkingdoms.com/about/responsible-travel](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com/about/responsible-travel)

## Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Depending on the holiday booked, clients travelling with us may be eligible for a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle (please see the What the Price Includes section of this itinerary), or to purchase a bottle from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

## Porter Protection

In the countries where we use porters we feel that the issue of porter protection is immensely important. We support the work and the aims of the IPPG (International Porter Protection Group) and as such we have a set of guidelines to adhere to and which we apply worldwide.



## Carbon off-setting

Working with Ecoan tree-planting project in Southern Peru we offset the carbon emissions for every Mountain Kingdoms holiday that includes an international flight.

