



## **Oman Adventure – North & South**

An exciting and exhilarating twelve-night expedition taking in much of Oman's impressive scenery and covering desert, coast, mountains, traditional towns, forts and souks.

With the exception of two nights in Muscat, the rest of the trip will be spent under canvas – there will be three nights in a simple fly camp which you will set up yourselves, with the help of our guides and the remainder of the camps will be set up in advance, exclusively for you, in Hud Hud's inimitable style.

Sleeping tents vary according to the location but are always appointed with proper mattresses, crisp cotton linen, feather pillows and traditional furnishings. Each sleeping tent has its own private bathroom tent, open to the skies and furnished with soft towels, basin, shower and a selection of soaps and lotions.

Each camp will offer a large, evocative majlis, decorated in a style in keeping with the ambiance of the environment, with cushions and rugs, topical books, boules and board games. Dining is at a properly laid table under the stars beside a crackling fire. Food is, as far as possible, locally sourced and is freshly prepared by our camp chef and always delicious. We use no electric light, other than solar, and the emphasis is on preserving the atmosphere through natural lighting provided by candles, oil lamps and camp fires.

### **Day 1**

We will head out of Muscat, travelling along the Al Batinah coast before turning inland to Nakhl, home to a restored fort surrounded by date palms and Ain a'Thawwarah hot springs.

From here we travel onto Rustaq and into the entrance of the exposed and impressive Wadi Bani Auf. This route takes us over the Hajar Mountains, a climb of over 2,000m and is one of the greatest and most memorable off-road drives of Oman. We pass through some very rugged and extraordinary mountain scenery, through small jebel villages and often through plenty of water on the track.

You will be met by qualified climbing instructors at the foot of Snake Canyon. After a short safety briefing, we will begin the scramble through the left hand fork of the canyon, or 'Little Snake Canyon' as it is known locally. The instructors need to make



# Hud Hud Travels

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sure that everyone can complete this 'entry level' route before tackling the more challenging side of the canyon tomorrow.

Wearing life jackets, safety hats and trainers, you will scramble, jump, swim and, depending on water levels abseil, your way up, over and round the boulder and obstacle strewn gorge. At the other end you will enjoy a much needed rest and warm-up as you have a picnic lunch in the sunshine.

Hud Hud will set-up a 'light' camp nearby. This will consist of either expedition style safari tents or white canvas bell tents, with camp beds and sleeping bags. Bathroom tents will be provided along with a shade for you to relax under whilst our camp chef serves up a delicious meal.

## **Day 2**

After an early breakfast, we make our way back towards Snake Canyon, or Wadi Bimmah, to tackle the more adventurous and challenging side of the canyon.

Abseil waterfalls, jump into crystal clear pools, swim and scramble through the real 'point of no return' Snake Canyon. This is the other fork that feeds into the Canyon. It's steeper, longer, and it's narrower sides make it even more beautiful. This is a very different trip with two abseils, one of which is 40 meters in total.

After the challenging route, we jump back in our vehicles and continue on through Wadi Bani Auf and over the Hajar Mountains. Depending on how long the canyoning route takes, we will either have a quick picnic lunch after the trek or we may have time to stop at the beautiful mountain village of Balad Sayt. If anyone still has the energy, there are some lovely hikes surrounding the village.

We continue on the breathtaking track up and over the spine of the Hajar, where the views are magnificent, and gradually wind our way along the gravel tracks to our camp, nestled over 1000 metres above sea level, in the mountains above the town of Tanuf in time for sundowners.

## **Day 3**

This morning, we drive to Jebel Shams and Oman's 'Grand Canyon'. We will travel via the traditional mountain villages of Al Hamra and Misfat al Abriyyin, both are rich in culture and provide great insight into the local way of life.

On our way to Jebel Shams, we pass through Wadi Ghul into Wadi an Nakhur which winds up the gorge to the summit. We take the balcony walk along the ridge of the canyon, taking in the breath taking views, until we reach an abandoned village.

From here, there is a small hike to the start of the Via Ferrata, where we meet up with our climbing instructors again. The route is mostly vertical and split in two sections that follow the old original sticks route put in years ago by villagers. This is not



# Hud Hud Travels

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climbing and you do not need any previous skills other than some upper body strength to enjoy. This is a reasonably demanding route and moderate fitness is required.

We return to our mountain retreat in time for sundowners and another delicious supper served under the stars.

## **Day 4**

Following a relaxed breakfast, watching the sunrise above the plateau, we break camp and head for Nizwa and the renowned market that, particularly on a Friday, can be a thriving and fascinating affair.

After a drive of around two hours through fabulous scenery, we reach the edge of the Wahiba Sands desert, where we will host a geo-caching challenge amongst the dunes before we continue on to our next camp.

The camp is set deep within the Wahiba Desert, avoiding light pollution and providing an amazing backdrop from which to relax and enjoy the night sky.

You can also try your hand at a little off road driving in the sands when we put you behind the wheel of a 4x4. Under the expert tutelage of our seasoned Omani drivers, you will be given little tips and tricks about how to rescue even the most deeply embedded vehicle.

## **Day 5**

After a leisurely breakfast, we head out of the desert, to Wadi Bani Khalid. This wadi flows south from the village of Bidah, spectacularly set against a mountain backdrop, a green oasis against the stark rock. The village still farms in a traditional manner growing dates, bananas, mangos, papaya and feed for livestock. A walk through this remote and little visited community provides an intimate insight into the lives of Omanis now and in many ways as they have always been.

The wadi flows out of the village and into a dramatic and steep sided gorge and provides a superb but easy 'canyoning' route; picking our way amongst huge boulders to discover deep, clear pools for swimming. This challenging and committing route is remote and serious, but also extremely spectacular and beautiful. The route takes a total of around five hours, depending on ability and fitness levels. We would carry all equipment with us, although there are no forced abseils en route, only some long swims of up to 300m or so.

By around 4pm we head back to camp for a shower, 'sundowners' and dinner. Dinner could be a traditional Omani shuwa, which involves cooking deliciously aromatic meat slowly in an underground oven.

## **Day 6**

After breakfast we take a truly exciting and, at times, challenging route back to Muscat; climbing up to over 2000m this is another one of Oman's most spectacular



# Hud Hud Travels

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off road drives. Our route takes us across the sand and out of the desert, and then following narrow gravel tracks we climb steeply up onto the Selma Plateau. The views on the way up and from the top are stupendous and the route takes us past 2000BC 'Bee Hive' tombs and the second largest sink hole in the world 'Majlis al Jin'. Lunch is served on the edge of the plateau with huge views down to the ocean below.

After lunch, the route drops steeply down to sea level and takes us north along the coast road to Muscat for arrival by mid to late afternoon.

Having a couple of nights back in Muscat will allow you to enjoy a little recovery and relaxation time before embarking on the next phase of your trip.

## **Day 7**

You can spend the day in Muscat simply relaxing at your hotel, or you may wish to explore some of the city with one of our guides.

Alternatively, we could arrange a trip by catamaran to nearby Bandar Kharian, a labyrinth of islands, beaches, Omani mountains, bays and natural channels. We can set-up a day camp on the beach for you to relax and enjoy a delicious barbeque lunch and some fresh home-made juices. Fishing, snorkelling, swimming and kayaking are also possible.

We would return back to Muscat at around 5pm, allowing everyone to have a good night's sleep before we head down to the south of Oman.

## **Day 8**

We take an early morning flight to the historic southern town of Salalah, where you will be met again by our team and jump back into our 4x4 vehicles.

We will head south along the coast, stopping in Mughsayl before turning right and heading up and over the Dhofar Mountains. The wildlife of the area is diverse and fascinating; there are numerous exotic plants and areas scattered with the fabled *Boswellia Sacra*, the Frankincense tree. The incense comes from its gum, and it has been harvested and traded by Omanis for millennia.

After a delicious picnic lunch we continue inland before turning north into an extremely remote and isolated area. Traffic in this region is almost nonexistent.

We leave the vegetation abruptly and enter the empty barren landscape of the Mountains of the Moon and Negd desert. Finally we drop down into the deep canyon of the Wadi Aydam, and it is here where we will set-up our first camp.

With the help of the guides, you will be pitching your own tents before the sun sets and in time to enjoy an evening under the stars. Dinner will be prepared by our guides.



# Hud Hud Travels

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## **Day 9 & 10**

We leave the main track and weave our way through the grandeur of the russet red sand dunes of the Rub al Khali, the Empty Quarter. This is a truly unique and special place, completely empty and made of towering 200m plus sand dunes as far as the eye can see. One of the last great wildernesses, where you can hear the blood rushing around your head and your heart beating. Nights are completely dark and absolute silence reigns. Colours of the sands are magnificent, varied and the scale is quite awe inspiring.

You will spend the next two days navigating the dunes to cross the bottom section of the Empty Quarter. With the assistance and support of our experienced guides, you will negotiate the dunes in order to find the best route using GPS equipment. All vehicles will carry the necessary safety equipment, including first aid supplies and satellite phones.

You will build your own camp and prepare your own meals, with the help of our guides, each night.

## **Day 11**

Today we leave the desert behind us and turn towards the coast and the historic port of Mirbat and for a well-deserved rest in the luxury of a Hud Hud camp.

Nestled on a beautiful secluded beach, embraced by twin headlands, a delicious lunch is served in your private Bedouin style majlis as you watch the endless waves of the Indian Ocean. The afternoon lends itself to enjoying a casual walk along the beach, a swim in the warm ocean waters, snorkelling amongst the coral shelves, or just relaxing with a book while you soak up your surroundings.

After freshening up in your private open air shower, dinner will be prepared and served by your personal camp chef, as you watch the sun sink over the horizon from your intimate beach retreat.

## **Day 12**

This morning you can relax and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the camp, or after breakfast partake in some exploration of the local surrounding region. This beautiful stretch of the Dhofar coastline is host to an array of wildlife including spinner dolphins, green turtles, and coastal bird life including ospreys, pelicans, flamingos and kingfishers.

There are a variety of trips to the surrounding area including Salalah's fruit gardens and exotic souq, where Frankincense is sold. Other attractions include the verdant Wadi Darbat where you can take a tranquil walk beside water pools and observe the abundant bird life.



# Hud Hud Travels

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There are the ruins of Sumerham, the ancient trading port of the Queen of Sheba and the charming old port of Mirbat, which in 1972 was the scene of a heroic battle between forces loyal to the Sultan and Marxist insurgents. All the key features of the battlefield are still easily identified. The old part of the town still boasts some of Dhofar's unique architecture and a stroll through the streets and alleyways, leading to the sea front, take you back in time.

## **Day 13**

Today we leave our beach camp, following the coast gradually back towards Salalah, possibly via the ancient village of Taqah before reaching Salalah in time for your flight back to Muscat.