



14 Day North to South itinerary

A stylish comfortable mobile safari, encompassing thirteen nights and fourteen days spent crossing the Sultanate of Oman from North to South, taking in much of Oman's impressive scenery and covering desert, coast, mountains, wadis, traditional towns, forts and souks.

Accommodation consists of two nights at the Alila hotel on Jebel Akhdar, 1 night at the Crowne Plaza Duqm, 2 nights at the Al Baleed Resort by Anantara and 8 nights in your very own private camps in the desert (Wahiba Sands and the Empty Quarter), on the coast and in a stunning Wadi.

Sleeping tents at the camps 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 after breakfast travelling along the Al Batinah coast before turning inland towards Nakhl, home to a restored fort surrounded by date palms and close to Ain a'Thawwarah hot springs.

From here we continue in direction of 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 2,000 m and is considered by many 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.



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We stop at the beautiful mountain village of Balad Sayt for a delicious and freshly prepared picnic lunch. before we continue on the breathtaking track up and over the spine of the Hajar, where the views are magnificent. From here we descend to Al Hamra, a 400-year old town, is home to some of the oldest preserved houses that can be found in Oman.

Winding up the rocky hillside, is the small ancient village of Misfat al Abriyyin with its picturesque collection of ochre-coloured stone buildings, giving it a somewhat medieval feel. A walk through this pretty village of twisting lanes and covered passages brings you to the falaj (irrigation system), which runs below the village, surrounded by lush bougainvillea, banana palms and other greenery.

From here we continue to the foot of Jebel Akhdar and wind up 2,000m to the Saiq Plateau, passing luscious juniper, fig and olive trees, before we arrive at the Alila in time for sunset.

Day 2

We can spend today exploring Jebel Akhdar, it's small mountain communities, farms, rose terraces and abandoned villages. Due to its temperate climate, roses, pomegranates and a variety of other fruit and vegetables are grown here.

Jebel Akhdar also has great importance in Oman's military history and British RAF relics can still be found here. The geology is fascinating and best explored by one of the great hikes in this area.

Day 3

Following an early breakfast, watching the sun rise above the plateau, we head for Nizwa and the renowned market which, especially on a Friday, can be a thriving and fascinating affair.

On the way to Nizwa we will stop at the UNESCO listed town of Bahla, famous for its fabulous renovated fort, souk and handmade pottery. The town of Jabrin is not much further and is home to, what is considered to be, Oman's most impressive fort, built during the Yaruba dynasty in 1688 and a marvel of castle engineering.

After some time exploring Nizwa's imposing fort and souk, we continue to Birkat al Mauz, at the foothills of Jebel Akhdar. Shaded date plantations are overlooked by the ruins of the original village of Birkat, which was evacuated during the Jebel wars. Here we can take a short walk along the afalaj, which is incorporated into the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Afalaj Irrigation Systems of Oman, which consists of five afalaj systems representatives of some 3000 systems still in use in Oman and which are believed to have been used in agriculture and farming for many centuries.

We will have a tasty picnic lunch enroute.



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From here, we will start to make our way towards the Wahiba Sands. The road to the desert passes the market town of Ibra, which contains some well-preserved merchant houses and the historic village of Mudayrib, which is today as it has been for many centuries. Leaving the tarmac road behind, we enter the desert and drive the final stretch on sandy tracks before reaching our camp, set-up with the russet red dunes.

The Wahiba Sands is a stunning desert of parallel valleys of sand dunes stretching north to south. Bedouin live, mostly on a seasonal basis, in the dunes tending to their camels. Our camp will be nestled deep within the desert, away from other tourists and light pollution from streets and villages at the desert's edge. The skies are crystal clear and covered with stars.

Day 4

Watch the sunrise over the imposing Sharqiya Sand dunes from camp, or for the more energetic, make your way to the top of a dune.

After a relaxed breakfast, we drive out of the desert to Wadi Bani Khalid, one of the greatest, most dramatic wadis in Oman, a green oasis spectacularly set against a mountain backdrop. The village still farms in a traditional manner growing dates, bananas, mangoes and papaya. A walk through this remote and little visited community provides an 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 canyon, which winds up from its entrance, occasioned by rock pools ideal for a quick dip. We will serve a delicious Hud Hud picnic lunch in the shade of the cliffs. The route is a combination of boulders, hiking and swimming that is great fun.

On the way to the camp you could 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. Sand boarding can be organised in the late afternoon or, alternatively, you can just relax and soak up the views before enjoying a fantastic dinner served beside a crackling log fire.

Day 5

After breakfast there is an opportunity to visit a local Bedouin family for traditional Omani kahwa (*coffee*) and dates. This brief meeting provides a means of better understanding how the people work and live, in what can be perceived as an extremely harsh environment.

We then jump into our 4x4s for a 100km crossing of the Wahiba sands and an opportunity for you to further hone your sand driving skills. We will stop for a delicious lunch and a quick dip where the dunes meet the sea at the fishing village of Qihayd. After lunch we continue south along the coastal road towards Bar Al Hickman, we cross a 40km salt flats before reaching our final camp, set on a white sand beach near a lagoon, where we often see



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flamingos, and the Indian Ocean. It is a large salt pan that is home to a vast community of sea birds as well as a host of migratory birds.

Day 6

We will enjoy a leisurely day on the beach with fishing, beach driving, snorkelling or perhaps we can visit the local towns and buy fresh fish if we don't succeed in catching our own. Which our chef can prepare for dinner.

Day 7

After a relaxed breakfast on the beach continue our way south to our next destination Duqm with opportunity to explore Duqm's Rock Garden an area of 3 square km made of sandstone rocks and limestone, which was created in an underground water aquifer around more than Forty Six million years ago. If time allows we can venture into the Huqf, an area considered special by geologists because there are rocks to look at from almost all of Oman's geological history with the oldest rocks dating from about 730 million years.

Alternatively you can also visit the picturesque village of Khalouf with a nice picnic lunch on at its famous sugar dunes.

Our accommodation for the night will be at the Crowne Plaza Duqm.

Day 8

Today we will continue our road along the coast towards the south, enjoying the tranquility of some of the least populated areas of Oman, stopping for a quick dip in the ocean at Al Qahil, a beautiful 8 km lagoon. The final stretch to our destination for the night is probably one of the most impressive and dramatic sceneries found in Oman. From atop the cliffs you can take in the whole of Wadi Shuwaymiah, with its rock faces consisting of layers formed and shaped over hundreds of years.

Reach your camp in Wadi Shuwaymiah and marvel at how nature created this stunning wadi, which is probably one of the best kept secrets in Oman, not only for tourists, but even for its own inhabitants.

Day 9

After a delicious and relaxed breakfast, we venture further into the Wadi, everytime finding new perspectives of its ever changing scenery and exploring the little oases where the dripping limestone created stalactites and stalagmites.

Return to your private camp for another great meal cooked by your private chef and a good night's rest.



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Day 10

After breakfast we get back into our car, for the last stretch to the coastal town of Salalah, the capital of the southern region of Dhofar.

Whereas it was previously required to turn inland toward the oil fields to reach Salalah, it is now possible to continue along the coast on an exceptionally engineered tarmac road, partly staying close to the sea, with views of stunning bays and beaches, and partly climbing onto plateaus to surpass areas still not accessible by car.

We join the south coast of Salalah close to the historical town of Mirbat with its charming old port, 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 seafront, take you back in time.

Depending on the time available, we can explore some of the sites in what is often referred to as the East Dhofari coastline, such as the ruins of Sumerham, the ancient trading port of the Queen of Sheba or the verdant Wadi Darbat where you can take a tranquil walk beside water pools and observe the abundant bird life.

We reach Salalah and check-in at what we consider the best hotel in town, the beautiful Al Baleed Resort by Anantara, located at the Al Baleed Archaeological Park, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Land of Frankincense for a well deserved rest.

Day 11

Visit the Al Baleed Archaeological park and the Frankincense Museum, before venturing into the town of Salalah, known for its green fruit gardens and Haffa Souq where Frankincense is sold.

We can also visit the West side of Salalah, making a stop at Mughsail, known for its blow holes and stopping at some nearby frankincense trees where your guide will explain how the resin is harvested.

Dinner at leisure at the hotel.

Overnight at the Al Baleed Resort by Anantara

Day 12

After breakfast, we take the road up and through the Qara Mountains, making stops on the way to absorb the beautiful views of the mountains and wadis on our way through the rocky desert.



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We stop at Wadi Dawkah, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Land of Frankincense”. Wadi Dawkah is a major place where the frankincense tree (*boswellia sacra*) can be found in large numbers and frankincense is harvested to this day. The incense comes from its gum, and it has been harvested and traded by Omanis for millennia.

After a delicious picnic lunch we pass Thumrayt, and make a stop at another site of the Land of Frankincense UNESCO site, the caravan oasis of Shisr, where we visit the remains of what is believed to be the lost city of Ubar.

We then turn into an extremely remote and isolated area, where traffic is almost nonexistent. 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. Our camp is set deep in the dunes and we arrive in time for you to explore your surroundings and take in the exquisite sunset.

Following dinner take a walk among the dunes to marvel at the night sky or relax by the campfire.

Day 13

Watch the sunrise over the imposing dunes from camp or, for the more energetic, make your way to the top of one! After a relaxing breakfast, there will be ample opportunity to explore this unique and hauntingly beautiful environment. A walk through the windswept dunes reveals the diversity of the region as well as the incredible plant life.

We pack a delicious picnic lunch and set out to explore the beautiful desert area, stopping to search for geodes that are often hidden in the sand.

In the evening, if possible, we visit a local Bedu from the Al Rashidi tribe to see his black camels and fascinate you with a wealth of detail about the disappearing way of life of those who still depend on them.

Day 14

Today, we will leave our desert camp behind and retrace our steps to Thumrait and onwards to Salalah in time to bid you farewell before your flight back to Muscat.