



# Hud Hud Travels



## Mountains and Beach

### Five Day Northern Itinerary with Jebel Shams & Bar Al Hickman

A stylish comfortable safari, encompassing four nights and five days in beautiful northern Oman taking in much of Oman's impressive scenery and covering mountains, coast, traditional towns, forts and souks. Accommodation is a combination of 2 nights spent in a private Hud Hud Camp on Jebel Shams and 2 nights at a private camp on the beach of Bar Al Hickman.

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.

The camps will also 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.

We stop at the beautiful mountain village of Balad Sayt for a delicious and freshly prepared picnic lunch.



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We continue on the breathtaking track up and over the spine of the Hajar, where the views are magnificent. From here we continue to the foot of Jabal Shams to Wadi Ghul, where we can explore the old ruins of its abandoned village. This area is home to perhaps the highest concentration of traditional carpet weavers in Oman, and as we venture further up Jebel Shams we will see their works on display. The track takes us to the edge of the Omani Grand Canyon. Your camp will be set up nearby, offering magnificent views over the jebel.

## Day 2

We spend today exploring Jebel Shams – the highest point in Oman. It is possible to hike up to the very top where the views are extremely rewarding, or down into Wadi Ghul below (both these options would require a specialised guide, which can be provided upon request at an additional charge). Alternatively, we can take a leisurely ‘balcony walk’ along the edge of the ‘Grand Canyon’. We then continue to a viewpoint further towards the summit to have our picnic lunch, from where, on a clear day, you can see all the way towards the coast and into some of the wadis such as wadi Mistal.

Another option is to spend some time exploring local mountain villages to gain an insight into the local way of life. Al Hamra, a 400-year old town, is home to some of the oldest preserved houses that can be found in Oman. We will visit Bait Al Safah, a renovated house turned into a museum with displays on the Omani Culture as well as life demonstrations by Omani women and men on how to bake traditional bread, grind flour, roast coffee etc.

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.

## 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 Sinaw. The small market town of Sinaw is well worth a visit. This is where the Bedouins come to do business and the souq can be a thriving and fascinating affair with all the hustle and bustle of a Middle Eastern market at its finest. Sinaw souq is amongst one of the oldest preserved souqs in Oman and one of the few places you can find traditional silver Bedouin jewellery.



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We will have a tasty picnic lunch enroute.

We continue south until we reach the coastal fishing village of Filim, a great place to spot a variety of birds including flamingos. By late afternoon, we pass by Muhut and cross a 40km salt flat before reaching our camp in Bar Al Hickman, set on a white sand beach near a lagoon, where we often see 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 4

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 5

Today we make an early start and wind our way north to the fishing village of Qihayd, where the desert dunes meet the sea. We continue further north to past the fishing port of Al Ashkarah and onwards to Sur. There are many fishermen and a thriving fish industry that has existed for centuries. There is a small dhow factory where the traditional sailing boats that have taken Omani explorers, traders and colonialists to the furthest reaches of the Indian Ocean, are still made.

We will then continue our route up the coast on the sea-side of the Hajar range stopping at the Bimah Sinkhole for a swim.

Invigorated, we arrive back in Muscat in the late afternoon.