

# Hud Hud Travels

---



## **Trekking & Luxury**

### **Seven Day Northern Itinerary with Jebel Shams, Wahiba Sands & Selma**

A stylish comfortable safari with a focus on trekking, encompassing six nights and seven days in beautiful northern Oman taking in much of Oman's impressive scenery and covering desert, coast, mountains, traditional towns, forts and souks. Accommodation is a combination of 2 nights spent in a private Hud Hud Camp on Jebel Shams, 2 nights in your very own Hud Hud desert camp in the Wahiba Sands and 2 nights in a private camp on the Selma Plateau.

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.

# Hud Hud Travels

---

We stop at the beautiful mountain village of Balad Sayt for a delicious and freshly prepared picnic lunch. Chance to do a hike in the surroundings or even to include a canyoning experience in snake gorge, through one of our adventure partners.

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. 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 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

# Hud Hud Travels

---

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.

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 or do a sunrise hike.

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.

We can 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.

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.

# Hud Hud Travels

---

## **Day 5**

This morning we start the first part of a trek that takes us on ancient trading routes up and over the Selma Plateau and then after 2 nights on the plateau down to the sea at the Gulf of Oman. This is not a technical trek, but it is a long traverse and we will start our trek early morning. Starting at around 650 metres, we walk through the lush coolness of Wadi Bani Khalid ascending gradually to a high point at 2157 metres. The rugged landscape of the Selma Plateau provides a stark contrast to the greenness of the wadi and offers panoramic views out over the stunning Ash Shariqiyah Mountains. We trek for 9 to 10 hours on relatively easy rocky terrain, but it is gentle and continuous ascent in hot conditions. On arrival at the plateau we meet our vehicle and transfer to our luxury private camp for our first night on the plateau.

## **Day 6**

Today we can visit some of the numerous beehive tombs built by the Umm Naa people around 2500BC and some of the ancient villages that were, until a couple of years ago, only accessible on foot or by donkey. We can also take the chance to rest after our hike from yesterday and enjoy the pleasures of having our private camp, away from the bustle of our daily lives.

## **Day 7**

Refreshed we make another early start and set off across the rugged plateau landscape for a 4 hour trek down to the coast. This is mainly a day of descent that starts off gradually with only losing 400m over the first 7km. The views are spectacular with the rocky mountains descending to the sparkly blue sea. We have lunch in the shade before we start the steep descent into the lush coolness of Wadi Tiwi with its dramatic rock faces and palms. We finish the route at the small village of Sooe, where there are some excellent swimming pools, a great place to wash off the trail dust, before walking the final easy stretch to our awaiting car and driver who will bring us back to Muscat.

Alternatively we can also forego the hike of today and descend by car to the coast to explore Wadi Shab, which will be an easy with a swim to a hidden cave waiting as a reward at the end. After some time spend swimming, we will return to our car via the same trek in order to return to Muscat.