



## Two Nights in the Wahiba Sands Desert

Enjoy the luxury of a comfortable two night expedition deep in the heart of the breathtaking Wahiba Sands. Our route takes us via much of Oman's most impressive scenery including mountains, wadis, traditional Omani villages, forts, and into the stunning sand dunes of the Wahiba Desert.

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

The 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, board games and yoga mats. At the desert camp we will offer sandboarding. Dining is at a properly laid table under the stars beside a crackling fire. Food is, as far as possible, locally sourced, freshly prepared by our camp chef and always delicious. We use limited electric light, and the emphasis is on preserving the atmosphere through natural lighting provided by candles, oil lamps and camp fires.

### Day 1

Leaving Muscat after breakfast we make our way through Wadi Mayh to the coastal road that runs between Muscat and Sur. After a short stop at the Bimah Sinkhole, we turn away from the sea and head up the northern face of the eastern Hajar Mountains. We follow a steep gravel track that, in a short time, takes us to the peak of the impressive Selmah Plateau over 2,000 m above sea level. Views to the north are of the Arabian Sea and, to the south in the hazy distance, the Wahiba Desert.

This track passes ancient villages that were, until a couple of years ago, only accessible on foot or by donkey. We visit the village of Al Jayla village, home to one of the 5 Falaj that are included in the UNESCO World Heritage site of the *Aflaj Irrigation Systems of Oman*. The Falaj has even been documented on one of Oman's bank notes. After some time to walk around the villages and a tasty picnic lunch we drive to one of the numerous beehive tombs present on this long, west facing ridge, built by the Umm Naa people around 2500 BC.

By mid afternoon we leave the mountains and head down towards the Wahiba Sands through Ismaiyyah. Passing the 18<sup>th</sup> Century fort at Mudayrib, we leave the tarmac road behind to



# Hud Hud Travels

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.

Overnight at a Private Hud Hud Desert Camp in the Wahiba Sands

## Day 2

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. The route is a combination of boulders, hiking and swimming that is great fun. After the visit of the Wadi, we will serve a Hud Hud picnic lunch in a shaded spot.

On the way back 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.

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## Day 3

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.

The onward journey passes some very dramatic terrain to the coast near the fishing town of 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 one of the luscious Wadis such as Wadi Mibam, Wadi Shab or Wadi Tiwi for a walk and a swim. Invigorated, we arrive back in Muscat in the late afternoon.