

“Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh”
Glorious Oman & Qatar – The Real Arabia!
Nov 25- Dec 3, 2019

Seeking an exotic adventure? This is a Holy Grail expedition two trending Desert Kingdoms that will provide thrills beyond all expeditions! It's scenery so dreamy, the natural wonders and timeless villages will cast a spell on you. See astonishing landscapes of sugar sand beaches, coconut palms, bluer than topaz waterholes and majestic mountains spilling into the sea. Here is a safe patch in the Middle East that's a world apart from the glitzy artifice of Dubai. Oman is a revelation.

We begin with touring Doha in sparkling Qatar, land of dates, doorways, golden sunsets and endless smiles. Doha isn't just an airline stopover anymore. She is filled with historic and architectural delights. On to Oman- Elegant Muscat oozes hospitality to visitors. You'll love our paradise in an oasis – Shangri La Resort & Spa which lies on a dramatic peninsula with endless activities.

The serene Sultanate of Oman is an epicenter of ancient culture. Here is a land of frankincense, myrrh, pomegranates groves and roses. It's rich in Biblical history. (I believe the Three Wise Men journeyed from here to Bethlehem - Parthian empire east of Persia & Judea.) Europeans are flocking here in decadent numbers. NOW is the time for us to go! Global tour operators state this emirate is topping traveler's dream lists and resort prices are expected to double January 2020. By securing hotels a year out, we locked in a great price with such a creative itinerary.

Seeking fun? Enjoy dune bashing over sands of the famous Wahiba desert. Spend 2 unforgettable Arabian Nights “glamping” in a Bedouin tent with delicious meals under twinkling stars. Explore a playground of wadis, waterfalls and swim in the iridescent Bihmah Sinkhole. Shop lively bazaars. Ride camels along the beach. Savor succulent Omani cuisines. Visit Prince Faisal's royal horse stables and watch a camel race. Photograph grand palaces and villages a thousand years old. There are opportunities for dhow cruises, Dolphin Watching, scuba and snorkeling with rays, sharks, moray eels and sea turtles.

December is a great time to visit with perfect weather and it's festive mood. Our group air is so easy and affordable. This trip isn't a cruise stop for tourists. This is for Travelers who long to be nomads in the quiet desert winds. Insha'Allah, authentic Arabia could be your best vacation ever! - Forever Oman!

Qatar & Oman

A land that understands a traveller can never be a stranger, just a friend not yet met.
That ultimately everyone is on their own journey,
seeking the warmth of a friendly embrace,
unique experiences, new stories to share.
Where a meal is not a meal unless it is shared.
A land rooted in ancient cultures, authentic soul,
where past learning informs contemporary vision.
Progressive spirit ignites new futures.
A land offering enlightenment, invigoration and inspiration
through its warmth of soul and spirit of vision.

Our Glorious Itinerary

NOV 25 – Depart USA to Doha on own or our great group air. Detailed Trip Tips will be emailed including our excellent group air.

NOV 26 – Welcome to Doha! D

We will be met by our guide and board a coach to hotel right on the Arabian Gulf in the heart of the city with free airport shuttle, wifi, pool and restaurants.

Doha, capital of the peninsular Persian Gulf country Qatar, is a modern city on Doha Bay. Ringing its downtown waterfront are numerous parks and the Corniche Promenade. This 7-mile green pedestrian-free zone offers amazing views of dramatic high-rise towers and filled with outdoor sports venues, cafes and shops. Ancient wooden dhows line the bay for rides to evoke Qatar's seafaring past.

Check-in at the hotel. Get to know your fellow travelers tonight at Welcome Dinner at hotel.

Overnight: Mercure Grand Hotel City Center, Doha

NOV 27- Discover Doha Tour - Gold Souq and Camel Races B

Discover the highlights of Doha, capital of Qatar a city where the old and the modern architecture blend. Starts with a photo stop at Museum of Islamic Art on the Doha Dhow water front. The building was designed by the award-winning architect Mr. I. M. Pei and it houses world's greatest collection of Islamic arts, including metal work, ceramics, jewelry, wood work, textiles, coins and glass.

Proceed to the Gold Souq, passing by corniche and Dhow harbor. Head to **Souq Waqif**, a market selling traditional garments, spices, handicraft, souvenir for over 100 years. It was renovated in 2006 to conserve its traditional architectural style. Head to **Pearl Qatar**, an extraordinary artificial man-made island created in a shape of an oyster, which has set the standard for luxury with all brands internationally.

Our next stop at **Sheikh Faisal, Camel Race Track & Equestrian Club**. The club showcases 15,000 historical pieces among which traditional Qatari artifacts, old-timers from all over the world as well as paintings & international art. Watch the camel training at the camel race track. Thousands of camels can be seen there. During the races little robot jockeys are used. Continue with the Equestrian Club which is the royal stable of Qatar, where we will visit the priceless royal and international horses and watch their training. There's so much to do here. Please see www.visitqatar.qa

Overnight: Mercure Grand Hotel City Center, Doha

NOV 28 - Fly to Muscat Oman / Wahiba (Group air 7:20AM – 10:10AM). B/L/D

After breakfast we transfer to Doha airport for our flight to Muscat. We are met by our guide upon arrival and board our motorcoach. Welcome to the land of gold, frankincense and myrrh – a valuable commodity along the Silk Road and ancient trade routes. The finest perfume oils come from the resins of Oman's frankincense.

Muscat is a warm, welcoming city surrounded by rugged, mountainous peaks and the beautiful beaches of the Arabian Sea. To look at, much of Muscat is very modern. However, underneath this modern facade is the city's past remaining in the form of the port district of Muttrah and **Muscat's Old Quarter**. Here you will find old Portuguese forts, colorful mosques and traditional Arabian buildings. Great tolerance is shown towards Western customs however Omani's retain strict morals concerning their own. The men wear traditional floor length dishdashis with the women wearing open faced scarves. Visiting Muscat is an essential start or finish to a vacation to Oman and offers a greater understanding to this fascinating country.

We drive 3 hours to famous Wahiba Desert, enroute stopping for lunch at a local restaurant for Omani cuisine with dates and Arabic coffees. Late afternoon check-in at camp for 2 nights of fun out of "One Thousand Arabian Nights." Total comfort in your goat-hair tents with bathroom and fun activities.

Evening enjoy a traditional barbeque dinner under the stars.

Overnight: Arabian Oryx desert camp, Wahiba.

NOV 29 - Wadi Bani Khalid & Wahiba Sand Dunes Experience! B/L/D

Today we visit **Wadi Bani Khalid** with its deep blue pools of water fringed by the date palms which is an ideal spot to relax or enjoy a warm water refreshing swim.

After lunch, we'll be Dune Bashing and Camel Riding at Wahiba sands. Dune Bashing – Experience drivers race you over dunes as high as they are wide for thrills of a lifetime.

The Wahiba Sands extend for some for hundred of miles in every direction and provides a real taste of the Arabian desert. The dunes rise up to 800 feet high and scattered encampments of the Bedouin people who still manage to eke out a living here, wandering from waterhole to waterhole with their animals.

There is the opportunity to explore the dunes on camel back and have fun interacting with a Bedouin family. You can also try sandboard dune surfing and ATV rides if feeling adventurous. Overnight: Arabian Oryx desert camp, Wahiba

NOV 30 - Wahiba - Muscat Sightseeing B/L

After breakfast, we head back to Muscat in our fun 4 x 4 jeeps and proceed for a photo-stop to magnificent **Al Alam Palace**, the most important of the six royal residences of the ruling monarch, Sultan Qaboos, which are dotted around Muscat, Salalah and Sohar. We also visit the Royal Opera House, Oman's premier venue for musical arts and culture.

Later, I can't wait to tour the famous **Amouage Perfume Factory** with its intoxicating fragrances! For over 30 years the name 'Amouage' has been known as a luxury brand famous for its decadence and sophistication. (It's a globally lusted after brand retailing in 65 countries with 14 stand-alone stores including Muscat, Rome and London. Aside from the main stores, the perfume is found in included the world's top department stores from Harrods to Selfridges and Bloomingdales.). Perfumes are something for Omani's to be proud of. From the outside alone, you can see the beauty and workmanship that went into designing and building a location to reflect the luxury brand.

Drive by the Grand Mosque with its sparkling gold dome. Visit the **Muttrah Souq**, one of the oldest marketplaces in the Arab world. It is also one of the few markets in the world where it is possible to buy **gold, frankincense and myrrh** all under one roof. The main thoroughfare of the market carries mainly household goods. Further inside, experience the mixed smells of frankincense, perfume oils and fresh spices. There are also a number of small shops on the side streets and marvelous alleyways leading up to the main market that are worth taking a look at, full of Omani silver and embroidered kumbhas. Explore the maze of this bazaar to soak up the vitality here!

We then proceed to check in at our luxury resort, oh boy!

Overnight: Hotel Shangri La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa , Muscat

Please google this to view its 6 swimming pools, 5 restaurants, Heritage Village, water sport center, Lazy River floating and spa all on a private beach.

DEC 1 – Full Day excursion to Wadis and Bimah Sinkhole B, L

After breakfast, we begin our full day tour driving by past famous Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. All non-Muslims welcome. Visit interior if time permits. Among the highlights is the mosque's beautiful prayer carpet, which was hand-crafted in Iran. Woven over a four-year period, this vast rug fills the entire prayer hall and is the second largest carpet in the world.

Then we head to the incredible Bimah Sinkhole and Wadis and enjoy an Arabian lunch. In **Wadi Abrayeen** we'll see deep gorges cut in the mountains and running to the sea. Have your cameras ready for shots of the pools of emerald waters, old villages and lush plantations. On to the **Bimah Sinkhole**, a spectacular limestone crater with blue green iridescent water to the bottom. Swim in the warm mineral rich water that almost looks surreal.

On clear sunny days while driving along the coast we may even see sharks in the deep blue water or fleet footed Gazelle sprint across the landscape. Drive back to hotel at Muscat .

Overnight at Hotel Shangrila Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa

DEC 2 - FREE DAY! AFSers love leisure time to scatter as they like. B

Explore more of Muscat or enjoy the resort amenities. Diving, snorkeling, sea kayaks, yoga, paragliding, banana boat and doughnut rides and camel rides on the beach for great Christmas photos. Available Water Sports at Hotel Scuba Diving Trips, Introductory SCUBA Diving lessons in the pools.

AFS optional Dolphin Watching Sail - \$76 details later.

Overnight at Hotel Shangri La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa , Muscat

DEC 3 - FLY TO USA

Morning free to enjoy our resort. The Chi Spa offers many unique treatments to choose from. Later we drive to airport for our flight home.

-Line-

I'm so happy to lead this group and it will sell out fast since many of my AFS friends requested Oman recently. This is an AFS once in a lifetime journey. - Suzy

LAND PRICE: \$2398 pp twin share (we'll find match)

A \$500 deposit secures your reservation. Small group limited to 32 participants.

INCLUDES :

- First class accommodation
- Buffet Breakfast at all hotels
- Welcome Dinner at Doha.
- Barbeque dinner at Wahiba (3 lunches, 4 dinners)
- Arabic Set Up Lunch at Wadi Arbayeen - Camel ride at Wahiba
- Bottled water during the tour in the vehicle.
- All transfers, sightseeing's and excursions by air-conditioned coach. - Assistance on arrival/departure by airport representative for group air. - Guided City Tour on private basis in Doha & Muscat.
- Accompanied Tour director in entire tour.
- English speaking guides in Doha & Muscat. AFS trip leader
- Entrance fees to monuments as per the given program. - All taxes and services charges

Group Air - \$TBA We will fly award-winning Qatar Air from JFK to Doha, Oman, Muscat and home Airlines will not price this until 11 months out.