



ADVENTURE
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ADVENTURE DUBAI & OMAN

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ADVENTURE DUBAI & OMAN

RIDING DAY 1 : DUBAI - AL-AQAH

Standard Route (338 km / 210 miles)

Our hotel outside Dubai allows for an easy start into our first riding day. Free of any big city traffic we ride our motorcycles out into the vast desert regions of the United Arab Emirates.

Well-built roads lead us north until we reach the decent-sized city of Ras al Khaima, outside of which we turn right to ride up the perfectly curved road to Jebel Jais. You will love riding your motorcycle up the mountain on this magnificent road. Maybe you would like to boost your excitement with some zip lining? There will be enough time for relaxation in the evening on the beach of our beautiful hotel in Al Aqah.

Highlights:

#1: Jebel Jais



Yes, it is sad that we weren't able to take the dirt road from Khasab back to the Oman. But what would we do if we missed out on this fantastic road leading up to the Jebel Jais from the Emirate's side? We are sure you will have a blast roaring up the paved and winding line of asphalt. On top of the mountain, an equally magnificent view over the mountain range awaits us.

#2: Zipline Jebel Jais



The question is: Will you be going for it or won't you? We are talking about the zip lining that you can do up here on Jebel Jais. No matter, whether or not you will be zooming down the mountain again for a stretch, or if you prefer watching others doing so. The vistas from up here are breathtaking and we will stay here to enjoy it during our lunch break.

RIDING DAY 2 : AL-AQAH - SOHAR

Standard Route (252 km / 157 miles)

Today we leave the Arab Emirates to enter the Sultanate of Oman. But before we cross borders, we will visit the two highlights of today. First, we will take a look at the oldest mosque in the Emirates. Afterwards, around lunchtime, we will arrive at the greater Hatta area in the UAE. Here we will get to see the famous Hatta Dams, and we will also learn more about the water supply in a desert country. The remaining part of the day we will use the well-maintained roads to reach our today's destination in Sohar.

Highlights:

#1: Al Bidya Mosque and Fort



Soon after we have left our hotel this morning, we will be passing by a little lime stone building situated near the road side. Thinking of a mosque you might imagine one of these humongous ones in the big cities. Because of its size, though, you could easily drive past this Al Bidya Mosque. But it is well worth stopping by as it is the oldest mosque of the United Arab Emirates still in use. Archeological research

has found out that the Al Badiyah Mosque must have been built between 1446 B.C. and 640 AD. Still today the mosque is used for regular prayers.

A few steps above the mosque you will find the Al Badiyah Fort, which offers a great view over the area.

#2: Hatta Dam



On our way up to the Hatta dams we pass the gigantic picture wall showing the Founding Fathers of the UAE, Sheik Zayed and Sheik Rashid. Arriving at the Hatta dams we will be welcomed by vistas of contrast between the turquoise waters of the dams and the surrounding brownish-colored rugged mountains. Although you may already have an idea where all this water is coming from, it still may appear to you like a little wonder to see so much water amidst such a huge desert area. In fact, during the winter months there is enough rain falling in the Hajar mountain range, which eventually finds its way to the Hatta dams. Being a desert area with an extremely arid climate, both the UAE and the Oman appreciate every drop of water they can get. A large part in Oman as well as the occasional farmer in the UAE still today uses the ancient Faladjs, small water channels, for the irrigation of their fields and gardens.

RIDING DAY 3 : SOHAR - MUSCAT

Standard Route (405 km / 252 miles)

Today we get to enjoy a long, beautiful ride through the picturesque and sparsely populated hinterland running along with the foothills of Oman's Hajar mountains and all the way to Muscat.

To cover today's distance, we follow the highway along the coast for the first 70 km or so, but then we turn inland. Countless bends and views accompany us on the road through the mountainous region. We won't be tackling any significant differences in altitude today, but we will certainly be overwhelmed by the countless mountains that surround us throughout the day. From the coast northwest of Muscat, the highway leads directly around the city and to our hotel outside.

Muscat is a vibrant metropolis with many attractions and a wide range of activities. Just the thing for a rest day.

Highlights:

#1: Sindbad and Sohar



going to magical places, and encountering supernatural phenomena.

Sohar is the capital and largest city of the Al Batinah North Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. It has also been argued that Sohar is identified with the ancient town called Omana. This settlement is believed to have given Oman its name. The most popular mythical figure of Oman, of course, is Sindbad the Sailor. Sohar has been credited as the mythical birthplace of Sinbad. Sinbad the Sailor is a fictional sailor and the hero of a story-cycle of Middle Eastern origin. During his voyages throughout the seas east of Africa and south of Asia, he has fantastic adventures

#2: Hadjar Mountain Range



The Hajar mountain range, with Jebel Shams and Jebel Kaur as its highest peaks, stretches from Musandam in the north of Oman via the capital Muscat to Sur in the east. It seems only logical that we encounter these mountains again and again during our tour. Unlike in the Alps, however, the paved roads in this area of the Oman Mountains, as it is also known for, usually wind their way between the mountains and rarely over them. This gives us a completely different view of the landscape with its sparse vegetation. Time and again, we will be amazed by the unusual sight of these rock formations and try to capture them in a photo. In some places, you can even see the layers of rock formation. Oman is one of the few regions on earth where the meeting of the earth's mantle and crust is visible on the earth's surface.

In the second half of the tour, however, we will also drive to higher altitudes and see the Grand Canyon of the Middle East, among other things. It seems to be an unwritten rule in Oman that as soon as the roads gain altitude, they often turn into unpaved terrain. We are happy about this, because it is precisely this that reveals the true beauty of Oman. From the green and fertile wadis in the river valleys, we head onto the unpaved roads with the backdrop of the steep mountain ranges of the reddish shimmering Hajar Mountains.

Geologically speaking, the Hajar Mountains, which consist mainly of chalk, limestone and ophiolite, are a continuation of the Zāgros Mountains in Iran. It was formed by displacements of the Arabian and Iranian plates. Climatically, the mountains of Hajar form a contrast to the rest of the country. While the rest of Oman always has a hot, subtropical climate, the higher regions usually show a cooler mountain climate, especially in winter. The nights cool down considerably and the summers are only moderately warm with more rainfall than usual.

The wadis that have formed between the towering mountains are often lush with palm groves, reeds and shrubs. This is in stark contrast to the rest of the area, which is mostly rock, stones, rubble and dust over long stretches, with at most a few tufts of grass or scattered acacia trees. The wadis, basins and oases often extend deep into the mountains, where vegetables, dates and citrus fruits also thrive. This is made possible by the falaj, the irrigation system in Oman. In the higher regions, roses are grown, to which the Omanis, who love fragrance, attach such great importance. So while the foothills of the Oman Mountains serve as a habitat and for agricultural use, the Hajar Mountains themselves are only sparsely populated.

RIDING DAY 4 : MUSCAT

Standard Route (90 km / 56 miles)

Muscat, Oman's Capital, features many must-see highlights. The most important one is located right in the center of the city - The famous Sultan Qaboos Mosque. It is one of the largest and most magnificent mosques in the Islamic world and undoubtedly deserves to be visited. We will spend about an hour for the visit. We would like to remind you at this point that both women and men must always keep their shoulders, arms and legs covered. Ladies on the tour should also bring a scarf to wrap over their hair and around their neck for the visit to the mosque. Unfortunately, women are not allowed to enter the mosque without a headscarf covering their hair and décolleté and a long-sleeved top.

We then visit the government district in Muscat and the harbor area with the famous Mutrah Souk. There you can stroll through the small, typical Arab market and buy your souvenirs in the colorful hustle and bustle. We will also take a few photos of the forts, which are also located in the harbor area. If you are planning a longer visit to one of the fortresses, you are welcome to do so afterwards. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Highlights:

#1: Muscat



Scenically wedged between mountains and ocean, with old forts and excellent museums, an opera house and flower-filled parks, the gentle city of Muscat is a delight to visit. Its name means 'safe anchorage', and the sea plays an important role in city life to this day, sustaining the fishing industry and providing opportunities for visitors to swim from sandy beaches or dive with turtles in nearby lagoons.

The city has a character quite distinct from neighboring capitals. There are few high-rise blocks, and even functional buildings are required to reflect tradition with a dome or an arabesque window. The result is an attractive, whimsically uniform city that retains the elegance observed by early travelers. The city is quite conservative in nature, asking of visitors decorum in dress and manner, but in return, it offers a warm sense of Omani hospitality and an opportunity to connect with the country's rich heritage. (www.lonelyplanet.com)

#2: Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque



The Sultan Qaboos Great Mosque in Muscat is among the largest Islamic religious buildings in the world. Even non-moslems are allowed to visit the majestic piece of architecture and its preciously decorated interior. After the agreement for the building plan was set in stone in 1992, they started to erect the building in 1995 by using several hundred thousand tons of sandstone. A 100 m tall main minaret, and 4 smaller ones of about 45 m were added to the corners of the construction. Together they are supposed to represent the five pillars of Islam. After six years of total construction time the grand mosque was opened for the first time on 4. May 2001. The building can hold up to 20,000 people, and inside the impressive example of Islamic architecture, you will find a gigantic carpet of about 4,200 square meters. It is said to be an Iranian masterpiece of carpet weaving. But it had to be made in 58 smaller pieces which were sewn together inside the mosque. Obviously, there is no loom large enough to produce such a size carpet. There is even a little bit of Austria installed inside the mosque. The mosque's center holds the world's second largest chandelier, completely covered in Swarovski crystals, measuring an impressive 15x8 meters, and weighing 8 tons.

Please remember to cover your head, arms, shoulders and legs before you enter the mosque. You can deposit your shoes in one of the boxes next to the entrance while your inside the building.

#3: Governmental District Muscat



The most eye-catching building in Muscat's government district is probably the Qasr Al Alam, or Flag Palace. Sultan Qaboos commissioned its construction in the early 1970s and it is easy to detect the Indian style of the building. The palace is no longer inhabited directly by the Sultan, it is used exclusively for representative purposes. The Sultan himself lives in a palace on the outskirts of the city in the Sib district.

Before the Qasr Al Alam, the palace Bayt Al Alam stood on the same site, which was built by Sultan Said (1791-1856). However, the palace was devastated by insurgents in 1859 and later lacked the funds to renovate it. After the Second World War, the palace was no longer inhabited and fell into disrepair. It was not until 1972 that the palace, which can still be seen today, was rebuilt by Sultan Qaboos. Over time, the old homes of the Indian traders who lived in the area at the time were demolished in order to expand the government quarter. Even if the palace is not open to the public, a photo of the outside is definitely worth the visit.

The palace and the government quarter, as they can be seen today, are framed by the two fortresses Fort Mirani and Fort Jalali, which were built by the Portuguese in the 16th century.

#4: Al Jalali Fort



The Al Jalali Fortress is one of two fortresses that served to guard the Omani capital of Muscat. It was built in the 16th century together with the neighboring Al Mirani Fortress as part of the city wall. This made the port of Muscat virtually impregnable.

#5: Mutrah Corniche Muscat



This afternoon, the Corniche of Muscat serves as a highlight as we drive past. The road along the banks of the capital replaces the slightly elevated old road, which served as the main connection to today's Mutrah district before the Corniche was built. Of course, we will look for a parking space on the Corniche to enjoy the beautiful views and take a few photos of the most important buildings in this part of

Muscat. Unfortunately, none of the buildings are open to the public, but they are definitely worth a look from the outside.

One of the most important buildings is of course the famous Qasr Al Alam Palace, which was completed in 1974. It is the dominant element of the old town and the government district.

The two impressive forts Al Jalali and Al Mirani are also located here.

Not far from the palace is the very simple Masjid al-Khor mosque. Blue domes and blue tiles dominate the façade. A perfect photo motif.

#6: Mutrah Souq



The Mutrah Souq is one of the oldest market places in the Arab world. No wonder, as Muscat is strategically located on the old trade route between Asia and Europe. As a quasi stopover, the city's harbor has always been a frequently used port of call for shipping. Therefore, the location of the Mutrah Souq is only logical. The souq served, and still serves today, as a "shopping mile" for the people of

Muscat, where they buy the daily necessities of life. In addition to local products such as the famous incense, textiles, fruit, vegetables and dates, most of the goods are imported. The locals also call the souk "Al Dhalam", meaning the dark alley. Due to the many paths between the small stores that wind their way through the covered square, sunlight doesn't stand a chance.

We are in the area around the Mutrah Souq at lunchtime. Not all the stores in the souq are open at this time of day. The busiest time is in the evening. Nevertheless, we will get a good impression of the Mutrah Souk.

RIDING DAY 5 : MUSCAT - RAS AL JINZ

Standard Route (273 km / 170 miles)

From our hotel in Muscat, we head straight south and tackle an outstandingly beautiful gravel road. From a rider's perspective, this is definitely the highlight of the day; later on, it's mostly main roads with few curves.

But this easy route is dotted with a number of out-of-the-ordinary sights along the way and, of course, we want to take our time to visit as many of them as possible. Maybe you have had already the chance to see a so-called sinkhole, or doline, in other places. Halfway through our route from Muscat to Sur, the Bimmah sinkhole will allow for a nice refreshing experience. So we recommend making sure your swim gear is with you on the motorcycle.

The city of Sur, our next highlight, represents the cradle of construction of the famous wooden Omani Dhow boats. And at the end of the day, the Ras Al Jinzz Turtle Reserve welcomes us as the very unique destination it is. Arriving there, we have come very close to the southwesternmost point of our tour through Oman, and our plan is to get to know all about the fragile world of these endangered animals.

Highlights:

#1: Bimmah Sinkhole



According to the stories of local people, there was once a meteor that fell down from the sky, thus creating a 40-meter-wide crater in this part of Oman's coastal region. Deep enough to make the turquoise water rise up and create the Bimmah sinkhole. More realistically, the nearby Gulf of Oman, over the course of time, has washed out the porous sandstone. Which consequently caused the surface

soil to collapse. The sinkhole, until today, is lovingly called „Hawiyat Najm“, meaning the shooting star. The sinkhole's magnificent color is based on the combination of salt water and fresh water.

We recommend you take your swimming gear with you and enjoy jumping into the refreshing pool.

ADVENTURE DUBAI & OMAN

#2: Wadi Shab



Wadi Shab for sure is one of the most beautiful Wadis in Oman. Walking along the footpath, you will pass by sheer rock cliffs, palm tree oases, and several gardens until you eventually reach an impressive gorge. Mother nature created a place of incredible beauty. If you want to experience the Wadi Shab, you need to park your motorcycle at the water inlet and walk into the Wadi. Even

though you could spend hours hiking along the path, you will arrive at the probably most impressive part after a 40 minutes walk through beautiful gardens and lush vegetation. During winter time, our travel time, the Wadi carries more water, thus providing for a refreshing bath in one of the pools. Should you want to see Wadi Shab, please keep in mind to bring comfortable walking shoes.

#3: Dhau Shipyard



One of the most typical features of Oman is the dhau, a type of wooden ship that has been built here for hundreds of years. Omani pearl divers used to use this type of boat to dive for pearls along the coastal region of the Persian Gulf. Today, the dhous are mainly used for fishing. Although Sur has lost its importance as a major seaport, still today the two mainly used dhous, the 'sambuq' and the 'shu'i', are

produced in the local dockyards.

#4: Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve



The Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve is a really great opportunity for us to watch the rare sea turtles laying their eggs or the hatching of the baby turtles. As you can imagine, this is a natural spectacle we will need to be flexible with. This is why we will only be able to finally coordinate our visit once we have arrived at our tonight's destination at the Turtle

Reserve.

The big sea turtles prefer the coast of the Gulf of Oman for laying their eggs, and so Oman is playing an important role in protecting these endangered animals. At the age of 35-40 years, the female sea turtle will become sexually mature, and will then lay approximately 70 to 120 eggs in a 50 cm deep hole in the sand. Once the eggs are covered with sand again the turtles are crawling back into the sea after the two-hour spectacle. The female turtle lays her eggs about 2-3 times per year, but only every second or third year.

RIDING DAY 6 : RAS AL JINZ - AL WASIL

Standard Route (238 km / 148 miles)

It will most likely be getting a lot warmer today, but sure enough, it will be getting sandier. We ride our motorcycles to the edge of the vegetation-rich sandy desert, the „Wahiba Sands“. The fact that, again, the mountains and the desert are located right next to each other, allows us to take another opportunity to visit one of these beautiful oases situated between the mountains. Your swim gear should be still on the bike from yesterday's dip anyways. So if you want to cool down in one of the water pools, you'll have it at hand.

Highlights:

#1: Wadi Bani Khalid



Approaching the Wadi Bani Khalid along the winding road that leads from the main desert road to the oasis, it is very hard to imagine finding some vegetation in such a dry valley. Except for mountains, there is not a single tree to be seen in this stone desert, let alone other vegetation. But all of a sudden, out of the blue, you are surprised to find palm trees rising up in front of you. They look like green spots between all the brown mountains. Surprise after surprise, you will find yourself standing in front of a large crystal-clear, turquoise pond surrounded by palm trees. Underground water sources make the existence of the fertile Wadi Bani Khalid possible in an otherwise dust-dry desert. The oasis clearly is a welcome refreshment in the heat of the day.

#2: Ramlat Al Wahiba Desert (Wahiba Sands)



Compared to other sandy deserts such as the Sahara or the Rub al Khali, the Ramlat al Wahiba or Wahiba Sands is a relatively small desert. From north to south it spans more than 125 miles and about 45 miles from west to east. On either side of the big sandbox, there are Wadis running along the edges to prevent the sand dunes from extending further inland. A special feature of the Wahiba Sands is the

abundance of grass that is growing in tufts all over the place. While other deserts show their sandy color, the Wahiba desert rather looks like a huge green field. The humid air that is floating inland from the Indian ocean causes the fog in the mornings and supplies the tufts of grass with the necessary humidity. Enjoy your overnight stay in the Wahiba Sands!

RIDING DAY 7 : AL WASIL - NIZWA

Standard Route (296 km / 184 miles)

After our relaxing night among the sand dunes, our 4WDs will take us back to our motorcycles near the streets towards the north. Hopping on our bikes, we will be enjoying fantastic rides on twisty roads to today's destination - the majestic Al Akhdar mountains. The road from Birkat Al Mouz leading up to our hotel at the top of Mount Al Akhdar promises to be a great ride. During the day, we can also choose to visit the Ladies' market of Ibra. Get involved in a chat with the women and find out about the origins of this unique market.

Highlights:

#1: Women market in Ibra



Women's market in Ibra - for women only! This special event in Oman dates back to the pregnant women who arrived at the Ibra hospital for treatment. Some of the women travelled a long distance in order to enjoy the benefit of the hospital's treatment on Wednesdays. As this was a rather expensive undertaking for many women, they started selling their products in front of the hospital. The

number of sales women gradually exceeded the hospital's limits of acceptance so that the market, without further ado, was relocated to the place across the street. This tradition, however, survived until today so that the ladies in our group can enjoy now the pleasure of rummaging in the market. Apart from all kinds of draperies you can find lots of typical omani everyday items. But the most interesting, for sure, are the women themselves! Sitting on the floor in their colourful dresses they are chatting and bargaining with their clients over the best price.

#2: Oasis Birkat al Mouz



Right on the road from Muscat to Nizwa, the beautiful village of Birkat al-Mauz is nestled against the rocks - a real ghost town. Abandoned in 1959, the local population was moved from Birkat al-Mauz to a modern village on the east side of the mountains. Located at the foothills of Jebel Akhdar, Birkat al-Mauz is an oasis, home to many birds, dense date and banana plantations. The village is quite impressive and will help you understanding how ancient omani life used to be like. Enjoy the remains of door frames, old paintings of the abandoned buildings. Engrained in the history of Oman are the old "Al Sharieh Falajs" still running through the village. A Falaj is a water channel used to water the village's plantations.

#3: Jebel Al Akhdar



The Al Akhdar mountain range no doubt belongs to the most spectacular sceneries of the Sultanate. About 700 well-developed wadis run between the mountains. These are unpaved but very well-graded roads, easy to ride. The two most dominant mountains are Jebel Shams, the highest peak, and Jebel Kawa, the second highest.

As the Jebel Akhdar region is home to unique and fragile nature, the whole region has been turned into the natural reserve „Jebel Akhdar Sanctuary for Natural Sceneries“ by the Sultan in 2011. Rainfall is extremely scarce so only those plants and animals have a chance to survive, which adapted to these conditions. To the visitor's surprise, however, the inhabitants up here are farmers and they grow various kinds of fruits and vegetables on terraces between the rocks. Mainly apricots, peaches, walnuts, and pomegranates. This explains why the locals call the otherwise very rocky Jebel Al Akhdar the „Green Mountain“. Thanks to the Mediterranean climate up here and the water channels (Faladjs), fruits can grow here that would not have the slightest chance to grow down in the desert valley. The farmers even grow the famous roses for the rosewater up here on the Saiq-Plateau.

We will be riding up the Jebel Al Akhdar on a curvy but also very steep road. A perfect road for riding a motorcycle. We are sure you will love the hotel at our tonight's destination on 2,000 m (6300 ft.). Standing on the terrace, looking down South to the desert valley, and being surrounded by the high mountains, will make you feel like you are on top of the world.

RIDING DAY 8 : JEBEL AL AKHDAR

Standard Route (227 km / 141 miles)

We're not sure if you even want to leave this superb mountain resort high up in the mountains on your rest day today. If not, we completely understand. It's just too beautiful to not enjoy it. For those who do feel a little adventurous, we, of course, also offer the opportunity to join us on a half-day rest day motorcycle tour. Both options are available today: either you choose the motorcycle route on which we dedicate ourselves to sightseeing in the villages of Nizwa and Bahla, or you are still hungry for more riding on unpaved roads. In that case, you should prefer this version of the rest day's ride. Although we also head towards Nizwa at first, we turn off before the town and take a more direct route towards the mountains. We climb to the highest point of today's route on an amazing stretch of dirt road and enjoy the last stretch of road to the summit on winding asphalt. A majestic view over the Hajar Mountains awaits us there.

The route can easily be arranged so that we are back at the hotel after a good half day so that you should still have enough time to enjoy the hotel's amenities.

Highlights:

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Optional Route (197 km / 122 miles)

If you're in the mood for a relaxed day of riding with a cultural touch, then you'll certainly enjoy this route. Riding a motorcycle today can clearly be described as easy. Today, our motorcycle only serves us as a convenient means of transportation to get back and forth between the two towns of Nizwa and Bahla. With its history, the city of Nizwa is probably one of the most famous sights in Oman. The famous animal market takes place here every Friday. If our rest day falls on a Thursday, you can also visit the animal market in Bahla instead. However, you should make sure you get there early enough. Nizwa and Bahla both have very interesting fortresses that you can visit on a round trip. In addition, Nizwa with its lively old town is a nice place for a lunch or coffee break where you can watch Omani lifestyle.

Highlights:

#1: Nizwa



Because Nizwa has easy access to water, it has developed into the center for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. At the same time, it is the most important trading center in the area. Nizwa has always played an important role in the history of Oman. Until the 12th century, it was the Sultanate's capital, and even after this time, it remained the „secret Capital“ and the religious center for the Ibatides.

Although the city has been widely modernized in the 1990s and thus has lost a lot of its original atmosphere, it remained attractive to visitors because of its monumental fort and the famous animal market.

The Nizwa Fort was built back in the 1650s, when Nizwa was still the Capital of Oman, with the mighty fort being the residence of the rulers. Looking behind the fort's strong gates will open up a labyrinth of staircases, corridors, terraces, and rooms with high ceilings same as tiny minor rooms. Most impressive, though, is the large tower attached to the fort. Supposedly, it is still the highest tower in the Sultanate. On top of the tower, 24 perfectly aligned cannons used to be installed, so that the fort could be defended 360°. Invisible to our eyes is the fort's foundation walls. They were installed up to 30 m deep into the ground. A fact that made the fort impregnable.

Each Friday from 7-11 am, the traditional Nizwa goat market takes place right next to the tower of the Nizwa fort. People from all over the country arrive in Nizwa not only to haggle over goats but also over any other kind of animal. It is said to be one of the biggest spectacles in Oman. It definitely does feel as if you were beamed back into the middle ages. Selling animals follows a strict ritual here. The animals are being presented to their potential buyers and while the seller keeps shouting out his price, the interested buyer is checking the animal and is shouting the price back he is willing to pay. The haggling goes back and forth until they either agree on a price or the seller steps back from selling. At first sight, it seems the haggling is done exclusively by the men dressed in their traditional white dishdasha, including daggers, belts, and ancient rifles. A closer look, however, reveals the beautifully dressed and precious jewelry-decorated women standing in the shade, watching the scene. If a goat belongs to his wife, the husband quickly talks with her over the price offered, and if she is nodding her head, the deal is done.

#2: Bahla Fort



Besides the Nizwa fort, there is another one in the city of Bahla. The fortress Hisn Tamah is the second most important in the region. It is also the only Omani fortress that was awarded UNESCO cultural heritage. Archeologists estimate that the fort must have been built in the 17th century.

The dark rock or the monumental Jebel Al Akhdar mountains in the background make for a perfect contrast to the fort's light-colored sandstone. The building material of the Hisn Tamah Fort, the same as that of all the buildings of Bahla city, is based on the adobe of the surrounding area. The city itself is surrounded by a 13-kilometer-long and 5-meter-high wall made out of adobe bricks, which turns it into the longest city wall in all of Oman. Comparing the two forts, the Hisn Tamah is no less amazing than the Nizwa Fort. Because of its impressive dimensions, you will only get an idea of its size when looking at it from the distance.

Same as in Nizwa, Bahla also has an animal market. Except it takes place on Thursdays between 8 and 9 am. Being no less a spectacle, the Bahla market has a lot more traditional and typical Omani spirit than the Nizwa animal market, probably because fewer tourists find their way here.

RIDING DAY 9 : JEBEL AL AKHDAR - AL-HAMRA

Standard Route (198 km / 123 miles)

Although two separate mountains, Jebel Al Akhdar and Jebel Al Shams are connected by the long mountain range that runs from Musandam in the north-east of Oman to Muscat. There is only one road leading up and down each of these mountains. Fortunately, both contain enough bends so that we, as motorcyclists, will certainly not complain if we "have to" ride them several times. However, if you want to see the unique spectacle of the animal market in Nizwa, you have to set off early from Jebel Al Akhdar this morning, as the animal market is held in the early hours of the morning and is usually over by 9am.

On the road that leads to Jebel Al Shams, we will make a detour to Misfath Al Abriyeen. This is one of the small, original mountain villages that has managed to retain its charm to this day. The reason for this lies in the way the fields are irrigated, which is still only possible using the faladjs that are so typical of Oman. You can get a very good idea of exactly how they work there. We will also learn more about the traditional way of life of the Omanis in an adobe house that has been converted into a museum.

The two riding highlights are the routes up to Jebel Shams, respectively to the famous Grand Canyon of the Middle East, and the road up to our hotel today.

At the end of the day, we can stretch our feet and enjoy the view from the hotel terrace, proud of what we have achieved.

Highlights:

#1: Oasis Misfat al Abriyyin



A tour through the old village of Misfat is quite suggestive of the ancient life of the people in an Omani mountain village. Through narrow alley ways and past those impressive adobe buildings and stone cottages we reach the Falajs transporting the water along the steep hills and to the elaborate lots of gardens. Compared to Birkat al-Mauz there are still 500 people living in this two hundred years old village. Misfat was awarded to be one of the best preserved villages in Oman. A lack of reserve from the tourist side has caused the locals to be more hesitant towards strangers. Visitors are very welcome but are asked to show respect when it comes to taking pictures! Next to the village's mosque, there is an area where local women do their laundry. Taking pictures is not allowed here. Any other places you may take pictures but ask for people's permission beforehand!

#2: Bait Al Safah museum



The old town of Al Hamra hides a well-taken-care-of gem, the cultural museum Bait al Safeh. It is not a run-of-the-mill museum, but rather a typical ancient Omani adobe house in which locals, in a lively way, show their visitors how life in an Omani village looked like back in the day. Local women will show us how they used to bake bread over an open fire or how they used to produce seed oil. At the end of the presentation, we will be served the local traditional coffee "qahwa omani" with dates. It is a unique chance to get a glimpse of Omani history.

#3: Jebel Shams



The Jebel Shams (Mountain of the Sun) rises north of the city of Al Hamra and, at 3009 meters, is the highest mountain in Oman. Located in the Al Hajar Mountains, the mountain is around 240 kilometers away from the capital Muscat. During the winter months, temperatures rise to a pleasant 20° C during the day. Strictly speaking, Jebel Shams has two peaks - a northern and a southern one.

Below the southern peak, a dirt road takes us up to a hill.

The Wadi Nakhar Gorge is also known as the Grand Canyon of Oman and is in fact almost as impressive as its famous namesake, the Grand Canyon in the USA. A high plateau at an altitude of almost 2,000 meters offers the most magnificent views of the imposing gorge. With a bit of luck, a vulture will be circling in the air.

The summit of Jebel Shams (3,009 m above sea level) cannot be driven all the way up. But it is possible to circumnavigate it at a slightly lower level.

On the way back, you should take time for a short stop in Ghul and take a look at the old, abandoned settlement that clings to the rock like an eagle's nest

RIDING DAY 10 : AL-HAMRA - AL AIN

Standard Route (288 km / 179 miles)

Full of impressions of the fantastic adventures of our journey through the Sultanate of Oman, unfortunately, today will be the day we have to leave the country again. But, of course, we still have another rare highlight up our sleeve - the beehive tombs. Even though, after all, they certainly are no bee hives, the structures we will be visiting are called like that because of the way they look. They definitely break the size limits of a regular beehive but they, indeed, do resemble them. Needless to mention that historical structures like the beehive tombs were not built right next to the road. Therefore we recommend carrying your walking shoes in the motorcycle's top case to be able to get quickly changed for our short hike. At the end of our riding day, we will cross borders back into the United Arab Emirates again. We will stay in the city of Al Ain, respectively at our elevated hotel on Jabal Hafeet. The border between the two countries separates the city into two parts. The Omani side is called Buraimi, though, not Al Ain as is the UAE part. Driving up all the way to the end point of Mount Hafeet, we will be able to take a last view over Oman.

Highlights:

#1: Wadi Al Aya Beehive Tombs



A beehive tomb is a burial structure characterized by its false dome created by the superposition of successively smaller rings of mud bricks or stones. The resulting structure resembles a beehive, hence the traditional English name. The earliest stone-built tombs were found here in Oman, built out of stacked flat stones which occur in nearby geological formations. They date back from 3,500 to 2,500 years BC, a period when the Arabian peninsula was subject to much more rainfall compared to now, and was supported by a flourishing civilization in today's desert west of the mountain range along the Gulf of Oman. Beehives were used for burials in several cultures, although burial remains have never been retrieved from these "tombs". But there is proof from other cultures, that they were used for different purposes, too, such as homes, rituals, and even as fortifications. Since 1988 the beehives have been listed as UNESCO cultural heritage. On our way back to the Emirates, we will be passing by and stopping for a visit.

#2: Jebel Hafeet



The Jebel Hafeet: there are so many outstanding facts to mention about the second-highest mountain of the Emirates that we decided to award it the sight of the day on our tour. To begin with, Jebel Hafeet ranks among the most amazing roads in the United Arab Emirates and even in the world. The 1240 m (4,000 ft.) high rocky giant is located near Al Ain and near the border to Oman. It is about 26 km (15 mi) long and about 5 km (4 mi) wide. But the best thing is that this three-lane road, built in 1980 by the German Strabag International, stretches along the whole mountain in 60 curves over 11,7 km (7.3 mi). Two lanes are for the uphill run and the third is for going down again. Our riding day will end on top of Mount Hafeet. Not only because we will get to see a fantastic sunset view over the Omani desert, but also because our hotel is located on top of the mountain. Since the road ends up on top, and we won't go any further, you will have the unique opportunity to ride the road as many times as you like. But please keep in mind that sometimes rich residents come to get their kicks in their million-dollar toy cars out of these corners ranging from tight hairpins to fast sweepers with fast straights in-between.

RIDING DAY 11 : AL AIN - DUBAI

Standard Route (202 km / 125 miles)

After so many wonderful days together, we don't just want to take the most direct route back to the hotel in Dubai. Even if the journey "only" takes us straight through the desert, there is still something to see. Just before Dubai is the most famous racetrack in the Arab world. It is neither for cars nor for motorcycles. We are going to have a look at the Al Marmoom camel racetrack. Regardless of whether we can actually attend a race at the time of our visit or not, we will definitely make a stop there so that we can at least take a photo. Before we park the motorcycles at the hotel, we want to see as much of Dubai as possible in as relaxed a manner as possible. There is only one place in Dubai to do this: let yourself be surprised. Dress code - swimwear, that much can be revealed.

At the end of the day, we'll certainly be full of impressions and raving about our trip well into the desert night.

Highlights:

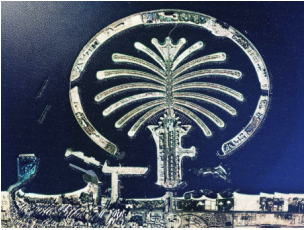
#1: Al Marmoom Dubai Camel Race Track



The early bird catches the worm! This rule is also true concerning the Al Marmoom Camel Race Track. If you wanted to experience a camel race, you would have to get up very early to be able to see one of these races with probably the most expensive racing camels ever, after the approximately one-hour drive to the place. Let's take our chances. Maybe we'll be lucky and we'll at least be able to

watch some of the camels in training. Either way, the camel racetrack is definitely worth a stop for a photo before we return to Dubai.

#2: The View at The Palm



The question is: Which is the best and the most effortless way to see as much of Dubai and its highlights in a short amount of time? Well, you could charter a helicopter, that's right. But to achieve this goal, even this would be too much effort. The Emiratis, very conveniently, have built a skyscraper called „The View at the Palm“. This way you can catapult yourself up to a glass platform 240 m (790 ft.) above the ground, by taking the elevator to the 52nd floor, and allow yourself to be taken away by an absolutely breathtaking 360° view over the world's largest man-made Island „The Palm Jumeirah“, the Dubai Skyline and its other glorious structures, and the Arabian Gulf.

The Palm itself is a world-known structure. It is hard to imagine that instead of the houses and hotels you can see today, there was nothing but water more than ten years ago. In order to realize this gigantic and expensive project, many million tons of rock and several hundred million cubic meters of sand had to be relocated and filled into place. The island consists of the palm's trunk with a six-lane feeder road, channeling traffic to the sixteen palm leaves.

Should the Palm Jumeirah be a must-do on your bucket list, we recommend you to schedule the number of highlights you can do today with your tour guide.

#3: Burj Khalifa




And here it is - the famous Burj Khalifa! From the road we will approach our hotel in Dubai, you have a brief moment at the hopefully red traffic light to take a great photo of the skyscraper. If not, you will certainly have plenty of opportunity to do so later. But this first sight, for sure, is the most impressive.

The Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world. Construction work on the 828-meter-high building, which began in 2004, was officially completed with the inauguration on 4 January 2010. If you love great heights, we recommend getting one of the tickets up to at least the 125th floor. Those who love heights can even go up to the 148th floor. But it is at least as impressive to visit the Burj in the evening and watch the spectacle of the light show and the water features from the ground level.

#4: Dubai



Dubai is the biggest city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and at the same time the capital of the Emirate of Dubai. About 85 % of the Emirate's inhabitants live in Dubai city and thus it is not surprising that Dubai is the central place for social life, culture, economy, and politics. Dubai represents a perfect mixture of a vibrant, cosmopolitan life and tradition. Apart from that it is a well-known synonym for luxuriousness! No other place in the world can boast of seven star hotels, man-made islands of all kinds of shapes or the tallest building in the world! Dubai's greater area has approximately 150 skyscrapers of more than 500 ft, 60 buildings of more than 650 ft and another 6 skyscrapers of more than 980 ft. One of them is Burj Khalifa with 2716 ft, the highest building in the world! In contrast to all this you will find the old dhow boats, chugging along the Dubai Creek, and the traditional souqs. Here you will come across all types of spices and herbs. Right next door you can stroll through the gold market and enjoy the building with its traditional wooden front and the typical bustling atmosphere of an Arabian souq. The history of Dubai can be traced back until 3000 years BC! In 1833, one of the important years of the area, the Bani Yas tribe settled at Dubai Creek. Until today, the dynasty, founded by their leader Maktoum Bin Butti, is ruling the Emirate of Dubai. But the biggest change that lead Dubai into a new and modern aera took place in 1966: Oil was found in Dubai-Fateh.



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EDELWEISS BIKE TRAVEL // Sportplatzweg 14, 6414 Mieming, Austria
Tel.: +43 5264 5690 // Fax: +43 5264 5690 3

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www.edelweissbicycle.com