



Oman

Mud-brick forts below bare mountains, green palm oases, golden dunes, misty monsoon hills and a long coast of fishing towns, in a land ruled by the same family since 1744.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Muscat

POPULATION

About 5.4 million (National Centre for Statistics and Information, September 2026), of whom about 57% are Omani citizens

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Arabic. English is widely used in business and tourism, and many workers speak languages of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

CURRENCY

Omani rial (OMR, often written RO), divided into 1,000 baisa and tied to the US dollar

AREA

About 309,500 km²

GOVERNMENT

Absolute monarchy: the sultan is head of state and head of government and rules by royal decree; the Consultative Assembly (Majlis al-Shura) is elected and advises

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Jebel Shams, in the Hajar Mountains, about 3,009 m according to the Ministry of Tourism (its highest summit is a closed military area)

LONGEST RIVER

None: Oman has no permanent rivers. Water flows through dry valleys called wadis only after rain, and ancient channels called aflaj carry spring water to villages

NEIGHBOURS

The United Arab Emirates to the northwest, Saudi Arabia to the west and Yemen to the southwest. Across the sea lie Iran, on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz, and Pakistan

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+968

A 45-minute trip to Oman

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Oman together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 2300 BC: Sumerian texts name Magan; 1744: Ahmad bin Said founds the Al Bu Said dynasty; 2020: Sultan Qaboos dies. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Shuwa and Maqbous (majboos). Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "As-salamu alaykum" (Peace be upon you (hello)), "Wa alaykum as-salam" (And upon you be peace (the reply)), "Sabah al-khair" (Good morning). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://preview.worldstroll.com/countries/oman/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Oman and its cities



- Muscat (Muscat Governorate, on the Gulf of Oman): The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Muttrah Corniche and its souq, Al Jalali and Al Mirani forts above the harbour, The Royal Opera House
- Sohar (North Al Batinah Governorate, on the coast): Sohar Fort, white and square, The legend of Sinbad the Sailor, A big modern port and industrial zone
- Buraimi (Al Buraimi Governorate, on the border with the UAE): The twin town of Al Ain across the border, Al Khandaq Fort, Date palm gardens watered by aflaj
- Rustaq (South Al Batinah Governorate, at the foot of the Hajar Mountains): Rustaq Fort, one of the largest in Oman, Hot springs at Ain al-Kasfa, Its role as an early capital
- Nizwa (Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate, in the interior): Nizwa Fort and its great round tower, The Friday livestock market, Pottery, silver khanjars and halwa

- Ibri (Ad Dhahirah Governorate, on the edge of the desert): Nearby Bronze Age tombs, a World Heritage Site, The old mud-brick quarter of Al Sulaif, Dates and farming
- Sur (South Ash Sharqiyah Governorate, on the east coast): Dhow building yards, The white lighthouse and houses of Al Ayjah, The nearby turtle beaches of Ras al Jinz
- Ibra (North Ash Sharqiyah Governorate, in the interior): The souq's women-only market day, Old mud-brick houses in Al Manzafah, The way into the Wahiba Sands
- Duqm (Al Wusta Governorate, on the Arabian Sea): A new deep-water port and dry dock, The Rock Garden, wind-carved stones in the desert, Empty beaches and fishing
- Salalah (Dhofar Governorate, in the far south): The khareef season and green hills, Frankincense trees and souq, The ruins of Al-Baleed
- Khasab (Musandam Governorate, an exclave on the Strait of Hormuz): Dhow trips into the 'fjords' of Musandam, Khasab Fort, Views over the Strait of Hormuz

A short history of Oman

Oman looks out to the Indian Ocean, so its history is one of sailors, merchants and sea empires, with a tribal interior ruled for centuries by elected religious leaders called imams. Early dates are approximate. Copper and frankincense made the land rich in ancient times, the Portuguese held its coast for more than a century, and Omani imams and sultans later ruled lands as far away as Zanzibar and Gwadar. Modern Oman took shape after 1970.

2300 BC Sumerian texts name Magan

Around 2300 BC clay tablets from Mesopotamia mention Magan, a land that sent copper and hard stone up the Gulf by boat. Magan is now identified with Oman and the nearby United Arab Emirates, where ancient copper mines and smelting sites have been found. The beehive-shaped stone tombs at Bat date from this Bronze Age world.

AD 630 Oman accepts Islam

Around 630 the Prophet Muhammad sent Amr ibn al-As to the two brothers who ruled Oman, Jaifar and Abd, sons of al-Julanda. They accepted Islam, and Omanis became Muslims early and largely peacefully.

AD 751 The first Ibadi imam is elected

According to many historians, al-Julanda bin Masud was elected the first Ibadi imam of Oman around 751. Ibadism, a branch of Islam that chooses its leader by the agreement of scholars and tribes, became the leading faith of the interior, and elected imams ruled the interior on and off for more than 1,000 years.

1154 The Nabhani dynasty takes power

In 1154 the Nabhani family came to power, ruling as kings with Bahla as their capital, while the imams lost most of their power. The Nabhanis grew rich from the frankincense trade, and the great mud-brick fort of Bahla grew in their time.

1507 The Portuguese capture Muscat

In 1507 a Portuguese fleet under Afonso de Albuquerque attacked the Omani coast and took Muscat. The Portuguese fortified the harbour and held a chain of coastal towns to control trade at the mouth of the Gulf.

The two forts that still guard Muscat harbour, Al Jalali and Al Mirani, were built in their time.

1624 The Yaruba imams unite Oman

In 1624 the tribes elected Nasir bin Murshid of the Yaruba family as imam at Rustaq. He brought the quarrelling tribes together and began to push the Portuguese out of their coastal forts.

1650 The Portuguese are driven out of Muscat

In January 1650, after a surprise attack at dawn by the imam's troops, the Portuguese garrison of Muscat surrendered. Only a small Portuguese post at Khasab in Musandam held out a few years longer. Around the same time the Yaruba imams built the great round tower of Nizwa Fort.

1698 Fort Jesus in Mombasa falls

Omani ships chased the Portuguese down the coast of East Africa. In 1698, after a long siege, Imam Saif bin Sultan's forces took Fort Jesus in Mombasa, in today's Kenya. Oman became the leading power on the Swahili coast, including Zanzibar.

1744 Ahmad bin Said founds the Al Bu Said dynasty

After a civil war and two Persian invasions, Ahmad bin Said, the governor of Sohar, drove out the Persians and was elected imam on 20 November 1744. His family, the Al Bu Said, has ruled Oman ever since, and as of 2026 Oman's National Day is celebrated on 20 November in memory of that date.

1856 Said bin Sultan dies and the empire splits

Said bin Sultan ruled from 1804 to 1856 and moved his court to Zanzibar, which grew rich from cloves and, sadly, from the slave trade. When he died in 1856 his sons quarrelled, and in 1861 British arbitration confirmed the split into two sultanates, Muscat and Oman in Arabia and Zanzibar in Africa.

1920 The Treaty of Seeb

After years of fighting between the sultan on the coast and the imam of the interior, the Treaty of Seeb, brokered by Britain in 1920, gave the imam self-rule in the interior while the sultan kept Muscat and the coast. The country was known as Muscat and Oman.

1958

Oman sells Gwadar to Pakistan

For almost two centuries the port of Gwadar, on the coast of today's Pakistan, belonged to the rulers of Muscat. On 8 September 1958 Pakistan bought it from Oman, and many families in both countries still have links across the Arabian Sea.

1967

Oman exports its first oil

Oil was found in the interior in the 1960s, and in 1967 the first tanker load of Omani oil left from the coast near Muscat. Oil money soon changed the country completely.

1970

Sultan Qaboos comes to power

On 23 July 1970 Qaboos bin Said replaced his father in a palace coup in Salalah. At that time Oman had only about 10 km of paved road and very few schools or hospitals. He renamed the country the Sultanate of Oman, abolished slavery and began a rapid programme of building that Omanis call the Renaissance.

1976

The Dhofar War ends

A rebellion in the southern region of Dhofar, backed by South Yemen and other left-wing governments, had begun in the 1960s. With help from Britain, Iran and Jordan, and with offers of amnesty and new roads, schools and clinics, the government won, and in early 1976 the war was declared over, although a few small clashes went on until 1979.

2020

Sultan Qaboos dies

Sultan Qaboos died on 10 January 2020, after almost 50 years in power, at that time the longest-serving ruler in the Arab world. A cousin from the same family succeeded him the next day, following the rules of the Basic Statute, Oman's constitution of 1996.

What people eat in Oman

Omani cooking grew up on trade routes, so it mixes Arab, Persian, Indian and East African flavours: rice, lamb, goat, chicken and plenty of fish, with cardamom, cinnamon, saffron, cloves, dried limes and chilli. The main meal is eaten in the middle of the day, often a big platter of spiced rice with meat or fish shared by the family, and the evening meal is lighter. Whenever a guest arrives, the first thing offered is kahwa, cardamom coffee, with fresh dates and a spoonful of sticky Omani halwa.

Shuwa

All of Oman, above all the villages of the interior; made for Eid

Oman's great festive dish: lamb, goat or camel rubbed with a paste of dried chillies, garlic, cumin, coriander and vinegar or date syrup, wrapped in palm or banana leaves and a sack, then lowered into a sand pit lined with hot coals and sealed. It cooks slowly for a day or even two, until the meat falls off the bone, and is served with rice.

Maqbous (majboos)

All of Oman and the Gulf coast; an everyday family lunch

Spiced rice cooked in the broth of the chicken, lamb or fish that goes with it, flavoured with onion, tomato, dried black limes, cardamom, cinnamon and a pinch of saffron. The meat is often browned at the end and laid on top of the golden rice, with fried onions and nuts.

Harees

All of Oman and the Gulf; made in Ramadan, for Eid and for weddings

Whole wheat grains cooked very slowly with lamb or chicken and water until the meat melts and the mixture is beaten into a smooth, thick porridge. It is served in a shallow dish with a pool of melted ghee on top and sometimes a little cinnamon.

Madrouba

All of Oman; a favourite in Ramadan

A soft, savoury porridge of rice, or sometimes cracked wheat, cooked with chicken or fish, onion, tomato and spices, then beaten hard until everything breaks down into one creamy mixture. It is eaten warm with a squeeze of lime.

Mishkak

All of Oman; street food at night markets and festivals

Small skewers of beef, lamb or chicken marinated in tamarind, garlic, chilli and spices,

grilled over charcoal and eaten hot, often with a tangy tamarind sauce and bread.

Khubz rukhal (Omani flatbread)

All of Oman; baked at home, often by grandmothers

A paper-thin round bread made by spreading a runny wheat batter in one quick sweep across a very hot, slightly domed iron plate. It dries in seconds into a crisp sheet. For breakfast it is eaten with Omani honey or an egg, and at dinner it is crumbled into curry.

Omani halwa

All of Oman; famous shops in Muscat, Nizwa and Sur

A glossy, sticky sweet of sugar, starch and ghee cooked for hours in a big copper pot and stirred all the time, then flavoured with rosewater, saffron, cardamom and nuts. Black halwa, coloured with caramelised sugar, is the classic; saffron halwa is golden.

Luqaimat

All of Oman and the Gulf; above all in Ramadan

Small balls of yeast dough flavoured with cardamom and saffron, deep-fried until golden and crisp outside and soft inside, then drizzled with date syrup and sometimes sesame seeds.

Balaleet

All of Oman and the Gulf; a breakfast for Eid and weekends

Thin vermicelli noodles fried in ghee and then cooked with sugar, saffron, cardamom and rosewater, served warm with a thin, plain omelette on top. The mix of sweet noodles and salty egg surprises many visitors.

Kahwa (Omani coffee)

All of Oman; offered to every guest

Lightly roasted coffee boiled with plenty of cardamom, and sometimes rosewater or saffron, poured from a tall brass pot called a dallah into tiny cups without handles. It is golden to light brown, bitter and fragrant, and is always drunk with dates or halwa.

Omani dates

Palm oases all over Oman, above all the Batinah coast and the interior

Fresh or dried dates from the country's millions of date palms, eaten with coffee at every visit, at breakfast and to break the fast in Ramadan. They range from soft, honey-like varieties to firm, dry ones, and some are pressed into a sticky paste or boiled down into date syrup.

At the table

- Hospitality is a point of honour. A guest is offered kahwa, dates and often halwa first, and it is polite to accept at least one cup.
- Hold the coffee cup in your right hand. When you do not want more, gently shake the empty cup from side to side before handing it back.
- Many families eat sitting on a mat on the floor around shared platters. Eat with your right hand only, and from the part of the platter in front of you.
- Take your shoes off before stepping onto the mat or carpet where food is served.
- Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol. During Ramadan, do not eat or drink in public during daylight hours; the day's meal starts at sunset, often with dates, water and luqaimat.

Shuwa

Oman's great festive dish: lamb, goat or camel rubbed with a paste of dried chillies, garlic, cumin, coriander and vinegar or date syrup, wrapped in palm or banana leaves and a sack, then lowered into a sand pit lined with hot coals and sealed. It cooks slowly for a day or even two, until the meat falls off the bone, and is served with rice.

Ingredients

- 2 kg lamb shoulder or leg on the bone
- 6 cloves of garlic
- 3 tablespoons ground dried red chilli (use less for a milder dish)
- 1 tablespoon each ground cumin and ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon each ground cardamom, cinnamon and black pepper, and ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 4 tablespoons white vinegar or lemon juice, and 2 tablespoons date syrup or honey
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil and 2 teaspoons salt
- Banana leaves (from Asian shops) or baking paper, and foil
- To serve: plain or spiced rice

Method

1. Crush the garlic and mix it with all the spices, the vinegar, date syrup, oil and salt to make a thick paste.
2. Cut deep slits all over the lamb and rub the paste into them and over the surface. Cover and leave in the fridge overnight.
3. Heat the oven to 150 °C. Wrap the lamb tightly in banana leaves or baking paper, then in two layers of foil so no steam escapes.
4. Put it in a roasting tin and cook for 4 to 5 hours, until the meat pulls away from the bone with a spoon.
5. Unwrap it carefully (hot steam) and serve on a big platter of rice, with the juices spooned over.

Maqbous (majboos)

Spiced rice cooked in the broth of the chicken, lamb or fish that goes with it, flavoured with onion, tomato, dried black limes, cardamom, cinnamon and a pinch of saffron. The meat is often browned at the end and laid on top of the golden rice, with fried onions and nuts.

Ingredients

- 1 chicken (about 1.5 kg), cut into 8 pieces
- 400 g basmati rice, rinsed and soaked for 20 minutes
- 2 onions, sliced, and 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped, and 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 dried limes (loomi), pierced with a knife
- 1 cinnamon stick, 4 cardamom pods, 4 cloves and 1 tablespoon baharat or mixed Gulf spice
- A pinch of saffron soaked in 2 tablespoons warm water
- 3 tablespoons oil or ghee, and salt
- To serve: fried onions, toasted almonds or raisins

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pot and fry the onions until golden. Add the garlic, the whole spices and the baharat and stir for 1 minute.
2. Add the chicken and brown it on all sides, then stir in the tomatoes, tomato paste and dried limes.
3. Pour in 1.2 litres of water with 2 teaspoons of salt, bring to the boil and simmer for 35 minutes. Lift out the chicken.
4. Measure 750 ml of the broth back into the pot, bring to the boil, add the drained rice, cover and cook on the lowest heat for 20 minutes. Sprinkle over the saffron water.
5. Meanwhile brown the chicken pieces under a hot grill. Pile the rice on a platter, place the chicken on top and scatter with fried onions and nuts. Nut allergy: leave out the nuts.

Harees

Whole wheat grains cooked very slowly with lamb or chicken and water until the meat melts and the mixture is beaten into a smooth, thick porridge. It is served in a shallow dish with a pool of melted ghee on top and sometimes a little cinnamon.

Ingredients

- 400 g whole wheat grains (harees wheat or pearled wheat), soaked overnight
- 700 g boneless lamb or chicken, in large pieces
- 1 cinnamon stick and 3 cardamom pods
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons ghee or butter, melted
- A pinch of ground cinnamon to serve

Method

1. Drain the wheat. Put the meat, cinnamon stick and cardamom in a large, heavy pot with 2 litres of water, bring to the boil and skim off the foam.
2. Add the wheat, cover and simmer on a very low heat for 3 hours, stirring now and then and adding hot water if it gets too thick.
3. Remove the whole spices and the bones, if any. Add the salt.
4. Beat the mixture hard with a wooden spoon or a hand blender until the meat and wheat become a smooth, stretchy porridge.
5. Spoon into bowls, make a hollow in the middle and pour in the melted ghee. Dust with cinnamon and serve hot.

Mishkak

Small skewers of beef, lamb or chicken marinated in tamarind, garlic, chilli and spices, grilled over charcoal and eaten hot, often with a tangy tamarind sauce and bread.

Ingredients

- 600 g beef or lamb (or chicken thighs), cut into 2 cm cubes
- 2 tablespoons tamarind paste
- 3 cloves of garlic, crushed, and 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon each ground chilli, cumin and coriander, and ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 2 tablespoons oil, 1 tablespoon lime juice and 1 teaspoon salt
- Metal skewers, or wooden skewers soaked in water for 30 minutes
- To serve: flatbread and lime wedges

Method

1. Mix the tamarind, garlic, ginger, spices, oil, lime juice and salt in a bowl.
2. Add the meat, stir well to coat, cover and leave in the fridge for at least 2 hours or overnight.
3. Thread the meat onto the skewers, leaving small gaps between the pieces.
4. Grill over hot charcoal or under a very hot grill for 8 to 10 minutes, turning often, until browned and cooked through. Chicken must have no pink left inside.
5. Serve at once with flatbread and lime.

Luqaimat

Small balls of yeast dough flavoured with cardamom and saffron, deep-fried until golden and crisp outside and soft inside, then drizzled with date syrup and sometimes sesame seeds.

Ingredients

- 250 g plain flour and 2 tablespoons cornflour
- 1 teaspoon dried yeast and 1 tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom and a pinch of saffron
- A pinch of salt
- About 300 ml warm water
- Vegetable oil for deep-frying
- To serve: date syrup (dibs) or honey, and toasted sesame seeds

Method

1. Mix the flour, cornflour, yeast, sugar, cardamom, saffron and salt. Beat in the warm water to make a thick, sticky batter, like very thick cream.
2. Cover and leave in a warm place for about 1 hour, until bubbly and doubled.
3. Heat the oil to about 170 °C in a deep pan. Never leave hot oil unattended.
4. Squeeze small balls of batter out between your thumb and first finger, or drop them from a wet teaspoon, into the oil. Fry for 4 to 5 minutes, turning, until golden all over.
5. Drain on kitchen paper, drizzle with date syrup and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Eat warm. Sesame allergy: leave out the seeds.

Kahwa (Omani coffee)

Lightly roasted coffee boiled with plenty of cardamom, and sometimes rosewater or saffron, poured from a tall brass pot called a dallah into tiny cups without handles. It is golden to light brown, bitter and fragrant, and is always drunk with dates or halwa.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons lightly roasted Arabic coffee, coarsely ground
- 1 tablespoon cardamom pods, lightly crushed, or 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 750 ml water
- A few strands of saffron and ½ teaspoon rosewater (optional)
- To serve: fresh dates

Method

1. Bring the water to the boil in a small pot. Add the coffee, lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Take the pot off the heat and leave it for 1 minute so the grounds settle.
3. Add the cardamom, and the saffron and rosewater if you use them, and simmer for 2 more minutes.
4. Leave to settle again, then pour slowly through a fine strainer into a flask or dallah, leaving the grounds behind.
5. Serve in small cups, filled only a third of the way, with dates on the side.

Useful phrases

As-salamu alaykum

as-sa-LAA-moo a-LAY-koom · Peace be upon you (hello)

Wa alaykum as-salam

wa a-LAY-koom as-sa-LAAM · And upon you be peace (the reply)

Sabah al-khair

sa-BAAH al-KHAIR · Good morning

Masa al-khair

ma-SAA al-KHAIR · Good evening

Kaif halak? / Kaif halich?

KAYF HAA-lak / KAYF HAA-lich · How are you? (to a man / to a woman)

Al-hamdu lillah

al-HAM-doo lil-LAAH · Praise be to God (I am fine)

Shukran jazeelan

SHOOK-ran ja-ZEE-lan · Thank you very much

Afwan

AF-wan · You're welcome; excuse me

Min fadlak / Min fadlich

min FAD-lak / min FAD-lich · Please (to a man / to a woman)

Ismi...

IS-mee · My name is...

Tasharrafna

ta-SHAR-raf-na · Pleased to meet you

Kam hatha?

KAM HAA-tha · How much is this?

Wayid ghaali

WAA-yid GHAA-lee · That's very expensive

Wain al-hammam?

WAYN al-ham-MAAM · Where is the toilet?

Ma afham

MAA AF-ham · I don't understand

Inshallah

in-SHAA-al-lah · If God wills

Ma'a as-salama

MA-a as-sa-LAA-ma · Goodbye (go with safety)

Ramadan kareem

ra-ma-DAAN ka-REEM · Have a generous Ramadan

Things you might not know

1. As of September 2026, the Omani rial is the third most valuable currency unit in the world, after the Kuwaiti dinar and the Bahraini dinar. It is pegged at about 2.60 US dollars and is divided into 1,000 baisa.
2. Oman has two exclaves surrounded on land by the United Arab Emirates: the Musandam Peninsula and the tiny Madha. Inside Madha lies Nahwa, a village of about forty houses that belongs to the UAE emirate of Sharjah: a piece of the UAE inside a piece of Oman inside the UAE.
3. As of 2026, the Al Bu Said family has ruled Oman without a break since 1744, which makes it one of the oldest ruling dynasties in the Arab world.
4. While the rest of Arabia bakes in summer, the Dhofar hills around Salalah are cool and green. From late June to late September the Indian Ocean monsoon, called khareef, brings mist and drizzle, and summer temperatures in Salalah stay at about 20 to 30 °C.
5. Frankincense, the fragrant resin of the Boswellia sacra tree, still grows wild in the hills of Dhofar. The old incense trade made the region rich for thousands of years, and its ports and oases are the UNESCO World Heritage Site 'Land of Frankincense'.
6. About 3,000 aflaj, ancient water channels, are still in use in Oman. Some run underground for kilometres to carry spring water to villages and palm groves, and water time is shared out between families by old rules. Five of them are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
7. The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman was the first site ever removed from UNESCO's World Heritage list, in 2007, after the government cut its area by about 90%.
8. In the 19th century the Omani ruler Said bin Sultan moved his court to Zanzibar, off the coast of today's Tanzania. Many Omani families still have relatives in East Africa, and some older Omanis speak Swahili.
9. The khanjar, a curved dagger in a decorated sheath, is worn at the waist by Omani men on formal occasions, and it appears on the national flag and emblem.
10. In 2010 the Jewel of Muscat, a copy of a 9th-century Arab ship, sailed about 5,000 km from Oman to Singapore. Like the original, its planks were

sewn together with coconut-fibre rope, without a single nail.

11. On 26 June 2018 the temperature in the coastal village of Qurayyat, near Muscat, never fell below 42.6 °C for a whole 24 hours, which was reported as a world record for the warmest low temperature.
12. A popular story, told by tour guides, says that British telegraph operators on lonely Telegraph Island in Musandam, driven mad by heat and isolation, gave English the phrase 'going round the bend'. There is no proof that the phrase began there.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Oman, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Shuwa or Maqbous (majboos)? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Sultan Qaboos comes to power (1970). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The Dhofar War ends (1976). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Oman, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Oman?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Which days make up the weekend in Oman?

- A) Friday and Saturday
- B) Sunday and Monday
- C) Saturday and Sunday
- D) Thursday and Friday

2. How do you say 'thank you' in Arabic?

- A) shukran
- B) marhaba
- C) afwan
- D) la

3. About 3,000 aflaj, ancient water channels, are still in use in Oman.

- A) True
- B) False

4. In Oman, traffic drives on the left.

- A) True
- B) False

5. In Omani Arabic, what does 'zain' mean?

- A) water
- B) good, fine
- C) bad
- D) tomorrow

6. In 2010 the Jewel of Muscat sailed from Oman to Singapore. What held its planks together?

- A) Iron nails
- B) Glue
- C) Coconut-fibre rope
- D) Copper bolts

7. Oman has no permanent rivers.

- A) True
- B) False

8. What is the official emergency number of the Royal Oman Police?

- A) 997
- B) 9999
- C) 999
- D) 191

9. Kahwa, the coffee offered to every guest in Oman, is flavoured above all with which spice?

- A) Black pepper
- B) Cardamom
- C) Turmeric
- D) Cumin

10. As of September 2026, non-Muslim visitors can tour the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque on Friday mornings.

- A) True
- B) False

11. Which opera was performed when the Royal Opera House Muscat opened in 2011?

- A) Carmen
- B) Aida
- C) Turandot
- D) La Traviata

12. 'Ramadan kareem' is a greeting used during the Muslim fasting month.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. A) Friday and Saturday

The weekend in Oman is Friday and Saturday. Friday is the day of communal prayer.

2. A) shukran

Shukran means thank you. Marhaba means hello, afwan means you're welcome and la means no.

3. True

True. The aflaj carry spring water to villages and palm groves, and five of them are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

4. False

False. Traffic in Oman drives on the right.

5. B) good, fine

Zain means good, fine: a word heard all the time in Oman and the Gulf.

6. C) Coconut-fibre rope

Like the 9th-century ship it copies, the Jewel of Muscat was sewn together with coconut-fibre rope, without a single nail.

7. True

True. Water runs through dry valleys called wadis only after rain, and ancient channels called aflaj carry spring water to villages.

8. B) 9999

The Royal Oman Police, ambulance and fire service are reached on 9999.

9. B) Cardamom

Omani kahwa is lightly roasted coffee boiled with plenty of cardamom, sometimes with saffron or rosewater.

10. False

False. As of September 2026 non-Muslim visitors are welcome on mornings from Saturday to Thursday, but not on Fridays.

11. C) Turandot

The opera house opened on 12 October 2011 with Puccini's Turandot, conducted by Plácido Domingo.

12. True

True. 'Ramadan kareem' means 'have a generous Ramadan'.

Oman visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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