

# OMAN & ZANZIBAR: The Sultans of Oman

19 Days

November 4 - 21, 2016

led by

**Professor Trevor Marchand**

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*Oman, steeped in history and tradition, is one of the most fascinating and beautiful countries of the Arabian Peninsula. From as early as 5000 BCE the region played a major role in the development of the ancient civilizations of western Asia, while its own numerous civilizations have left a rich archaeological legacy. Beginning in the intriguing capital of Muscat, we will visit several of the many incredibly well-preserved fortresses that dot the country and discover the splendid variety of architecture and building types that Oman has to offer. We will visit the historic walled town of Nizwa, situated at the end of Sumail Pass, and stop at the ancient town of Qalhat, founded by the Persians in the 2nd century and visited by Ibn Battuta, before traveling south to visit the many historic sites around Salalah.*

*Said bin Sultan, like his father before him, strategically controlled the Strait of Hormuz and places on the northern Gulf, but it was to Africa that he directed his greatest ambitions. From 1829 he gradually extended Omani influence over the East African coast, making Zanzibar his second capital and introducing clove plantations to this luxuriant "Spice Island." Zanzibar had been familiar to Arab sailors since the time of the Periplus in the 2nd century CE, but the present site of Zanzibar town began as a Swahili settlement around the 10th century and, like most of the East African coast, it was dominated by the Portuguese for nearly two centuries. The Stone Town of today is still characterized by Omani houses, with their elaborately carved wooden doors, and the architectural embellishments of the 19th-century Gujarati merchant-traders.*

**TREVOR MARCHAND**, a specialist in Islamic and indigenous architectures, received his degree in architecture from McGill University and his PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he is Professor in the Department of Anthropology. With a specialization in building-craft knowledge and vernacular architectures, he conducted fieldwork in Yemen, worked as an architect in India and has traveled extensively in Oman and Zanzibar, studying indigenous building practices. Professor Marchand has received numerous awards and fellowships and has traveled in West Africa, Morocco and the Middle East, studying local building practices. He has lectured at Ahmadu Bello University on Islamic architecture. His publications include *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen* and *The Masons of Djenné*, which won three international awards. He is the co-producer of the documentary film "Future of Mud," and Director of the documentary film "Masons of Djenné," produced for his exhibition on "Mud Masons of Mali" at the Smithsonian Institution. Fluent in Arabic, Professor Marchand's knowledge and enthusiasm have made him a popular lecturer for Mali, Yemen and Central Asia tours. This will be his third tour of Oman and Zanzibar.

**Friday, Saturday, November 4 & 5: MUSCAT: Grand Hyatt Hotel**

Depart from our home cities on Friday. We arrive into Muscat Saturday evening. We will be met and transferred to our hotel.

**Sunday, November 6: MUSCAT: Grand Hyatt Hotel (B/L/D)**

After meeting with Professor Marchand for an opening lecture, our touring begins with a drive along the Mutrah Corniche to view the residence of the sultan, **Al Alam Palace**, flanked by two magnificent Portuguese forts guarding the bay. We will visit the **Bait al-Barandah**, a 19th century merchants' house and now a museum presenting the history of Muscat, and the charming **Bait al Zubair**, a private museum housing traditional Omani items reflecting the country's rich heritage. The day ends at **Baushar**, an important Iron Age site with fine examples of late Lizq, early Samad period honeycomb tombs.

**Monday, November 7: NIZWA: Golden Tulip Hotel (B/L/D)**

We leave Muscat in our 4-wheel-drive vehicles, stopping first to visit the splendid pre-Islamic fort at **Nakhl**. Occupying an area of 36,597 square feet, its interior is a maze of carpet and cushion-covered rooms. We continue through date palm oases to view the fort of **Rustaq** from the outside. Built over a spring, Rustaq fort is thought to have been founded by the Persians in the pre-Islamic period. We pass **Mishkin Fort** and continue to Al-Ayn to visit **Bat**. Here beehive tombs, tower forts and large freestanding communal graves have been linked to the Umm an-Nar (2500-2000 BCE) culture. After examining these unusual structures, we continue to **Nizwa**.

**Tuesday, November 8: NIZWA: Golden Tulip Hotel (B/L/D)**

Today's touring begins at **Has't bin Sult**, a 20-foot rock covered with engravings of men, women and children. After hearing some of the folklore related to this site, we continue to the charming old town of **Al Hamra**, to walk among the old mud houses, one of which is thought to be 400 years old, and to **Misfah**, one of the most picturesque villages in Oman. We will tour the interior of **Jabrin Castle**, an excellent example of Omani residential architecture, and view the huge **fort at Bahla**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, from the outside. This spectacular building is surrounded by 7.5 miles of mud-brick walls. After visiting one of the few remaining potters in this once famous pottery town, we return to Nizwa.

**Wednesday, November 9: NIZWA: Golden Tulip Hotel (B/L/D)**

Touring begins with **Nizwa** souk and round tower fort as well as its famous falaj (ancient irrigation system). We then drive north via Sumail Pass to **Samali** to examine its falaj. We will visit nearby **Akdar**, where weavers still use the traditional

methods of dyeing and pit weaving, continue to **Samad**, a fascinating oasis town famed for its seven watchtowers.

**Thursday, November 10: SUR: Sur Plaza Hotel (B/L/D)**

This exciting day will take us via **Al Mudayrib**, stopping to see its city gate and some of its beautiful old carved doors, into **Wahiba Sands**. The dune system of this immense desert is believed to have existed before the last pluvial period in Arabia around 4,000-6,000 years ago and houses hundreds of species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. As we drive among the dunes, soaring 200-260 feet, we will encounter some of the Bedouin who live here, herding their sheep, goats and camels. After lunch at a desert camp, we continue to **Sur**. This evening we will offer an opportunity to visit the the **Raz al Hadd Turtle Reserve**.

**Friday, November 11: MUSCAT: Hotel Hormuz Grand (B/L)**

This morning we drive south to visit **Ras el-Jinz** and **Ras el-Had**. For the past 35 years a joint French/Italian team have been excavating these sites and have made important discoveries that connect this region with the Indus Valley civilization of the 3rd millennium BCE.

**Saturday, November 12: SALALAH: Hilton Hotel (B/L/D)**

A spectacular flight over the Wahiba Sands brings us to **Salalah**. After visiting the **Salalah Museum**, we will visit the ancient city of **Dhofar (Al-Baleed)**, **Old Salalah** and some of the regions's natural wonders.

**Sunday, November 13: SALALAH: Hilton Hotel (B/L)**

We drive into the **Jebel Qara** escarpment to **Job's Tomb**, sacred to Muslims as the burial site of the patriarch. We continue into the "empty quarter" to **Hanun**, site of an ancient storehouse for frankincense and a small temple dedicated to the moon god **Sin**, placing this site as an important transit point en route to **Cana** and **Shabwah**. Finally, we reach the lost city of **Ubar**, described as a major city on the incense route, with imposing architecture, vast orchards and fabulous wealth. Excavations continue to reveal the walls and foundations of the city.

**Monday, November 14: SALALAH: Hilton Hotel (B/L)**

Our full day of touring begins at the pre-Islamic port of **Sumhuram**, founded by the rulers of **Shabwah**. Beautifully situated on the banks of the **Khor Rawri**, it is currently being excavated by an Italian team. We will visit the picturesque town of **Mirbat** and explore **Wadi Darbat**, known to house prehistoric paintings in some of its caves.

**Tuesday, November 15: MUSCAT: Grand Hyatt Hotel (B)**

This morning we return to Muscat for an afternoon at leisure.

**Wednesday, November 16: ZANZIBAR: Zanzibar Serena Inn (B/D)**

Transfer to the airport for our flight to the romantic island of **Zanzibar** for four nights at the beautiful **Serena Inn**, perfectly set on the shore of the Indian Ocean. This evening we will meet for an introduction to Zanzibar, followed by dinner.

**Thursday, November 17: ZANZIBAR: Zanzibar Serena Inn (B/L)**

A morning in-depth walking tour of **Stone Town** examines its unique architecture, influenced by a mix of Arab, Indian, European and African traditions. The marvelous Zanzibari carved wooden doors, no two alike, are a symbol of the once wealthy householders who lived within. We will take a long break midday and regroup in the late afternoon for a lecture by a representative of the Preservation Society.

**Friday, November 18: ZANZIBAR: Zanzibar Serena Inn (B/L/D)**

Today's touring includes the old palace at **Dunga** and the oldest mosque in East Africa at **Kizimkazi**. The mihrab of this unusual Shirazi mosque is inscribed on the one side with the Arabic date 500 H (1107 CE) in beautiful Kufic writing, and on the other, its restoration date is inscribed in coral. We will also visit **Unguja Ukuu**, the oldest settlement on Zanzibar and seat of the traditional kings and queens. We will also visit the **Jozani Forest**, home to the red colobus monkey, bush babies and dozens of species of butterflys and birds. This evening we will have dinner and a concert of Taarab music.

**Saturday, November 19: ZANZIBAR: Zanzibar Serena Inn (B/L)**

Traveling through verdant countryside, we visit the **Mtoni Palace**, the **Persian Baths**, built for the Persian wife of Sultan **Seyyid Said** and the ruins of **Maruhubi Palace**, built by Sultan **Barghash** in 1882 to house his harem. At **Fukuchani** we will explore the remains of a Portuguese settlement and continue to the tip of the island, where traditional dhows are still being built. We will then visit a **spice plantation** to examine the bushes and trees from which nutmeg, cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom, vanilla and Zanzibar's famous cloves are produced. This evening we will conclude our adventure with a sunset sail on a traditional dhow.

**Sunday, November 20: (B)**

After a day at leisure we depart for **Dar el Salam** and connect to our flights home.

This tour should be considered moderately strenuous. It requires walking over rough surfaces, step climbing and some long driving days. For the most satisfying experience, and in fairness to your fellow travelers, all participants are expected to be physically active and able to walk independently throughout our full touring days.

**COST OF TOUR: \$8395**

(excludes international airfare)

Single Supplement: \$1280

Costs are based on a minimum of 20 participants. A \$300 small group charge will be added for groups under 20 participants.

**THE TOUR RATE INCLUDES:**

**Transportation:** Surface travel by motor coach as detailed in the itinerary, all flights within Oman and flights between Oman, Zanzibar and Dar el Salam.

**Hotels:** In twin-bedded rooms with private bath as listed or similar.

**Meals:** All meals are included table d'hôte as listed. B - Breakfast L - Lunch D - Dinner

**Transfers:** Arrival and departure transfers on tour dates.

**Baggage:** One checked suitcase and one carry-on bag that will fit under your seat.

**Tipping:** All gratuities to guides, drivers and porters are included.

**Not included in the tour cost:** International airfare, passport fees, airport taxes, visas, excess baggage charges, insurance, beverages and items not on menus.