



Yemen يمن

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Best Places for Culture

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Why Go?

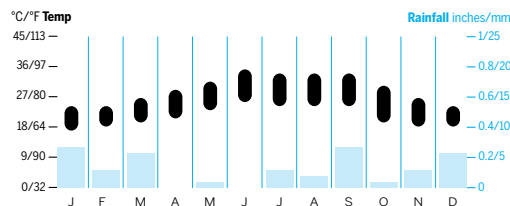
Yemen is, in many ways, the birthplace of all our lives. In days past, the sons of Noah knew it as the land of milk and honey, Gilgamesh came here to search for the secret of eternal life, wise men gathered frankincense and myrrh from its mountains and, most famously, a woman known simply as Sheba said Yemen was her home.

Yet since the book of mythology was closed, Yemen has remained largely locked away in a forgotten corner. This is a huge oversight, because Yemen is a deeply romantic and utterly unique place in which to travel.

However, there is a problem: travel here has never come easily, nor in complete safety; but today Yemen dances on the brink of catastrophe and you should assess the security situation carefully before taking the plunge. But if the security situation allows then the rewards of travelling here are enormous.

When to Go

Yemen



Sep–Dec The monsoon rains are ending, the mountains are green and the hiking superb

Nov–Feb This is the time to hit the Tihama Red Sea coastal regions or the eastern deserts.

Jun–Sep Gale force monsoon winds can make visiting Socotra island a bit of a pain

Daily Costs

Basic living costs in Yemen are low. A simple meal in a cheap local cafe can be had for US\$2 to US\$3 or double that at a posher restaurant. Budget hotels are US\$10 to US\$15; mid-range hotels average US\$20 to US\$40. Bus travel is cheap.

What sends the cost of living right up is the fact that at present, due to the unstable security situation, you can only travel in Yemen as part of an organised tour for which you're looking at a minimum of US\$100 per day – often more.

IS YEMEN SAFE?

The first question on the mind of every visitor to Yemen is almost certainly: 'is it safe?'. The simple answer, as of April 2013, is No. Since the political demonstrations of 2010 Yemen has been virtually at war with itself. At one point much of the country was completely out of central government hands and there was heavy fighting throughout Yemen including in the capital, Sana'a. Today things are better, but far from perfect. A degree of security has returned to Sana'a, parts of the nearby mountain areas, the island of Socotra and one or two other areas, and the first brave tourists are starting to return. However, in early 2013 Yemen was still considered highly dangerous and Lonely Planet does not recommend travelling there given the unstable security situation. For more information, see p404.

On the Ground Research

Due to the highly dangerous security situation throughout Yemen we were unable to conduct on-the-ground research anywhere in the country. This chapter is a combination of information dating back to 2010, and remotely researched information obtained via the telephone and internet in 2012. For Sana'a, around Sana'a and parts of the Haraz Mountains, on the ground research was conducted by a Yemeni tour company.

Itineraries

Travel itineraries in Yemen are greatly influenced by the current security situation. A few years ago most of the country was open to foreign tourists. Today, hardly anywhere is (although things are starting to improve again). At the time of writing the following was the only realistic itinerary and even that was liable to be shut down at short notice.

Start in the old city of Sana'a allowing a catlike curiosity to lead you through alleyways, up back streets and into interesting corners. Then climb into the Haraz Mountains to explore by foot the numerous villages and breathtaking scenery here in the trekking heartland. Returning to Sana'a fly to the island of Socotra for some birdwatching, beach time and more hiking.

At A Glance

- ➔ **Currency** Yemeni riyal (YR)
- ➔ **Mobile Phones** Widespread phone network; foreign phones sometimes blocked.
- ➔ **Money** ATM's accept Visa cards in bigger towns. Also bring US dollars cash.
- ➔ **Visas** Only issued to people on an organised tour. Not available on arrival.

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Sana'a
- ➔ **Country code** 967
- ➔ **Language** Arabic
- ➔ **Official name** Republic of Yemen
- ➔ **Population** 23 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	YR 224
Bahrain	BD1	YR569
Euro zone	€1	YR280
Kuwait	KD1	YR754
Oman	OR1	YR558
Qatar	QR10	YR590
Saudi Arabia	SR10	YR572
UAE	Dh10	YR584
UK	UK£1	YR 328
USA	US\$1	YR 214

Resources

- ➔ **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/yemen) Tips and information.
- ➔ **Yemen Times** (www.yementimes.com) News.
- ➔ **British Government Travel Advice** (www.fco.gov.uk) Travel warnings issued by the British government.