



Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Jenny Walker, Anthony Ham, Andrea Schulte-Peevers

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula	6
Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula Map	8
Arabia's Top 15	10
Need to Know	18
First Time Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula . . .	20
What's New	22
If You Like.....	23
Month by Month.....	27
Itineraries	30
The Hajj	34
Expats.	38
Countries at a Glance	47

ON THE ROAD

BAHRAIN	50	Tree of Life	73
Manama	53	Oil Museum.	74
Around Bahrain Island	69	Muharraq Island	74
Bahrain Fort		Dar Island	78
Complex.	69	Understand Bahrain. . . .	78
A'Ali	70	Bahrain Today.	78
Sar	70	History	79
King Fahd Causeway	70	People & Society	80
Al Jasra	71	Arts.	81
Riffa Fort	71	Environment	81
Bahrain International Circuit.	71	Survival Guide.	83
Al Areen	72		



DESERT CAMELS P413



LIONFISH IN DUBAI AQUARIUM, UAE P313



Contents

KUWAIT 86

Kuwait City 90

Failaka Island 107

Fahaheel 108

Al Ahmadi 108

Ras Al Zour 108

Entertainment City 108

Al Jahra 108

Mutla Ridge 109

Understand Kuwait ... 109

Kuwait Today 109

History 111

People 114

Religion 115

Environment 115

Survival Guide.....117

OMAN121

Muscat 123

Around Muscat 146

Seeb 146

Bandar Jissah 147

Yitti 148

Wadi Mayh 148

Bandar Khayran 149

Al Seifa 149

Qurayat 149

Mazara 150

Sur & the Eastern Coast 150

Sur 150

Ayjah 153

Sinkhole Park
(Hawiyat Najm Park).... 153

Mountain Road
to Jaylah 154

Tiwi 154

Wadi Shab 154

Wadi Tiwi 155

Qalhat 156

Ras al Jinz 156

Ras al Hadd 158

Al Ashkarah 158

Al Ashkarah to
Shana'a Road 159

Masirah 159

Jalan Bani Bu Hassan
& Jalan Bani Bu Ali 162

Al Kamil 162

Wadi Bani

Khalid 163

Jaylah 164

Wadi Khabbah &

Wadi Taybein 164

Al Mintirib 165

Sharqiya (Wahiba)

Sands 165

Ibra 167

Sinaw 168

Nizwa & the Mountains..... 169

Nizwa 169

Around Nizwa 171

Mountain Road via Hatt &
Wadi Bani Awf 172

Birkat Al Mawz 174

Jebel Akhdar 174

Jebel Shams 177

Bahla & Jabrin 179

Bat & Al Ayn 180

Ibri 180

Buraimi 181

Sohar & the Batinah Plain181

Sohar 182

Nakhal 183

Wadi Bani Kharus 184

Wadi Bani Awf 184

Rustaq 184

Wadi Hoqain 185

Barka 186

Sawadi 187

Damanayat Islands 188

The Musandam Peninsula 188



THE EMPTY QUARTER IN OMAN P220

ON THE ROAD

Khasab	188
Khasab–Tibat Road	192
The Musandam Khors	192
Jebel Harim	193
Rawdah Bowl	193
Salalah, Dhofar & Southern Oman	194
Salalah	194
Around Salalah	200
East of Salalah	201
West of Salalah	203
Shisr (Ubar)	203
Hayma	204
Duqm	204
Understand Oman	206
Oman Today	206
History	207
People & Society	209
Religion	210
Arts	210
Environment	211
Food & Drink	213
Survival Guide	214
QATAR	222
Doha	225
Al Wakrah & Al Wukair	242
Mesaieed	242
Khor Al Adaid	242
Umm Salal Mohammed	243
Umm Salal Ali	243
Al Khor	243



SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE, ABU DHABI P351

Al Ghariya	244	Madain Saleh & the North	275
Al Ruweis & Around	244	Al Ula	275
Al Zubara	244	Around Al Ula	276
Bir Zekreet	244	Madain Saleh	277
Understand Qatar	245	Tabuk	279
Qatar Today	245	Around Tabuk	283
History	245	Mecca	284
People	247	Understand Saudi Arabia	291
Arts	249	Saudi Arabia Today	291
Environment	250	History	291
Survival Guide	251	People	294
SAUDI ARABIA	255	Religion	295
Riyadh	257	Environment	295
Camel Market & Around	263	Survival Guide	296
Dir'aiyah	264	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	304
Riyadh to Mecca	266	Dubai	308
Hejaz	266	Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa	331
Jeddah	266		
Taif	271		
Yanbu	273		

Contents

UNDERSTAND



ASSORTED NUTS IN NIZWA
SOUQ, OMAN P169



MUGHSAIL, OMAN P203

Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula Today	394
History	396
People & Society	404
Arts, Sports & Leisure	410
Islam in Arabia	415
Flavours of Arabia	419
The Natural Environment	429

SURVIVAL GUIDE

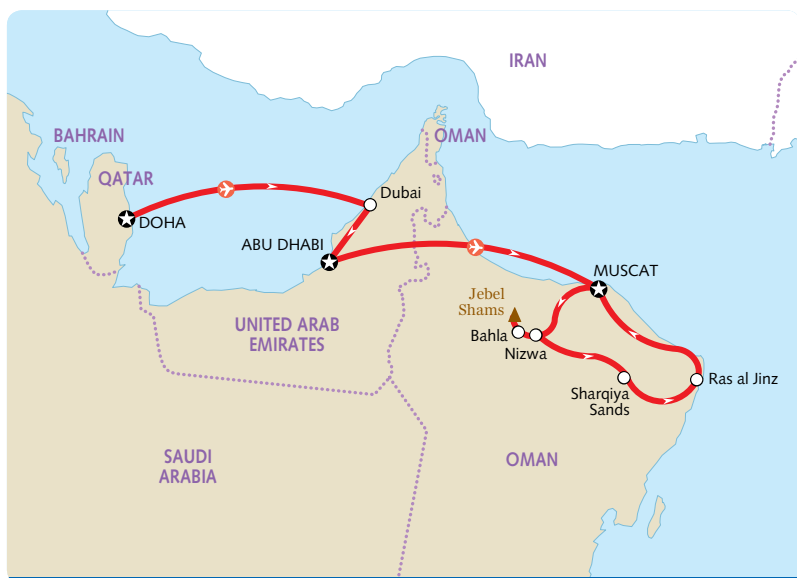
Safe Travel	436
Directory A–Z	441
Transport in the Arabian Peninsula	449
Health	457
Language	461
Glossary	465
Index	469

SPECIAL FEATURES

The Hajj	34
Expats	38
Grand Mosque (Al Masjid Al Haram)	286
Flavours of Arabia	419
Safe Travel	436

Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa	331
Hatta	331
Northern Emirates	332
Sharjah	332
Sharjah Desert Park	338
Ajman	338
Umm Al Quwain	340
Ras Al Khaimah	341
Abu Dhabi	345
Al Ain	365
Al Gharbia	369
East Coast	374
Fujairah City	374
Khor Fakkan	377
Badiyah	378
Al Aqah	378
Dibba	379
Understand the United Arab Emirates	380
History	380
Government & Politics	381
Economy	381
People & Society	382
Arts	383
Environment	384
Survival Guide	385

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Best of the Peninsula

Weaving between the sites of modern and ancient Arabia, this itinerary highlights the best Peninsula experiences feasible in the least amount of time. It focuses on three Gulf cities and then offers a relaxing contrast to the urban pace in the wilds of Oman.

Begin with two days in **Doha**, with its skyline of modern architectural gems. Loiter with falcons in Souq Waqif and visit the Museum of Islamic Art to understand that the Gulf is built on ancient values.

Fly to **Dubai**, a city obsessed with the newest, biggest and best, for a two-day stop, including that totem of superlatives, Burj Khalifa. Spend a day in **Abu Dhabi**, the UAE's cultured capital, visiting Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque – proof there's more to the Emirates than shopping.

For a complete contrast, fly from Abu Dhabi to **Muscat**. See how 40 years of 'renaissance' has created a modern nation underpinned by respect for heritage – evident during a four-day tour of **Nizwa** and **Bahla**. Allow three further days to forget history by hiking at **Jebel Shams**, camel riding across **Sharqiya Sands** and watching turtles return to the beach of their birth at **Ras al Jinz** before returning to Muscat.



3
WEEKS

The Gulf Experience

Many people visit one of the Gulf capitals as a stopover en route to somewhere else. There are more than enough diversions and experiences on offer, however, to make it worthwhile to combine these city states as a destination in their own right.

Spend four days in each of the five main Gulf cities, flying between each. Begin in dry, traditional **Kuwait City**. Learn here the sensory vocab of Arabia – the haggling in Souq Marbarakia, the haunting call to prayer and wafts of sheesha from outdoor coffeehouses. Add to the Arabian lexicon by tracing similarities between Peninsula cultures at Tareq Rajab Museum and leave time to explore the urban landscape of high-rise towers – the quintessential icons of Gulf modernity.

Oil is responsible for Arabia's rapid propulsion into the 21st century: see how in nearby Bahrain, home to the Oil Museum. Enjoy the glamour associated with black gold at the Formula One racing circuit. Pearls gave the Gulf its former livelihood: buy a string at Gold City in **Manama** or dive for your own off the **Hawar Islands**.

Fly to neighbouring Qatar, renowned for its commitment to hosting international sports. **Doha** also boasts one of the most spectacular modern skylines in the world built on reclaimed land. Visit **Khor Al Adaid** in southern Qatar and watch the inland sea get its own back as it encroaches into the dunes.

Abu Dhabi, the cultural and political capital of United Arab Emirates, is another city reliant on reclaimed land – which becomes obvious on a walk along the beautiful Corniche. Punctuate your high-voltage city tour with an escape to **Liwa Oasis**, where life moves at the pace of a camel's stride.

If you miss the dynamism of the urban experience, then the best has been kept until last. Spend four days in and around **Dubai**, discovering what makes it the region's most internationally famous city. Cook with chefs, shop with sharks, view the city from the world's tallest tower and dine underwater in the Gulf's most can-do city.



5
WEEKS

Pan-Peninsula: Five Countries in Five Weeks

They may share the same Peninsula, but arid Kuwait City in the north and subtropical Salalah in the south are so different in character they may as well belong to different continents. Explore the diversity of Arabia by spending three days in each of the five main conurbations of the **Gulf**, enjoying the modern miracle of these virtual city states.

With the city-centric part of the journey over, escape from **Dubai** at the start of week three to the starry skies and apricot-coloured dunes of **Al Ain**. Allow time to wander through souqs of grumbling camels and listen for the ghost of intrepid desert explorer Wilfred Thesiger, commemorated in the fort museum.

End week three by crossing the border via **Buraimi** to **Ibbri** in Oman – the land of 1000 towers and fortifications, cresting mountain tops and looming over wadis. The building of towers in the region has been a tradition for millennia, as pre-Islamic burial towers at **Bat** testify. Continue through the castle towns of **Jabrin** and **Bahla** to **Nizwa**, where the mighty Jebel Shams looms over the heritage city.

Begin week four taking a break from the vertical in the ultimate horizontal bus ride – crossing the edge of the Empty Quarter on the flat and utterly featureless highway to **Thumrait**. The descent into **Salalah**, Oman's southern capital, after 10 hours of stony-plain monotony is sublime, especially during the rainy season when the desert turns green. End week four among frankincense trees near **Mughsail** and see where the precious resin was traded at Al Baleed and the ancient harbour of **Khor Rouri**.

With a car, begin week five skirting the Arabian Sea from Salalah to **Hasik** and the remote coast road north. Pause for a night or two of wild camping, or press on to the frontier town of **Duqm** for unexpected five-star luxury in the new resort developments in the booming port town. Complete a lap of **Masirah** to understand the true meaning of the term 'desert island' before continuing along the edge of the Sharqiya Sands to **Ras al Hadd**. Spend a day in **Sur**, where the lighthouses of Ayjah guide dhows to safe haven, before heading to journey's end in the hospitable city of **Muscat**.

5
DAYS

Easy Escape from Dubai

If the intensity of Dubai begins to take its toll, a trip into the neighbouring Emirates and Oman provides an enjoyable antidote. Oman's Musandam Peninsula makes a good weekend break, but with an extra day or two, a mini-tour of northern Oman is possible.

From **Dubai** head north to **Sharjah**, a hub of heritage and Islamic arts. On day two, wind through the northern Emirates to the **Shams-Tibat border** and enter Oman's fabled Musandam Peninsula. Enjoy the spectacular drive along the cliff-hugging road to **Khasab** and time your arrival for a dhow cruise in Musandam's celebrated *khors* (creeks).

Spend day three in a 4WD, exploring **Jebel Harim** and Rawdah Bowl with its 'House of Locks'. Return to Khasab and on day four take the ferry to **Muscat**: entering Mutrah harbour at night is a magical experience. Visit Mutrah Souq and Muscat's old quarter and on day five meander west via **Nakhal** and **Rustaq** with their magnificent forts and pause for a swim at **Sawadi**. Stretch to an extra day by over-nighting in the growing town of **Sohar**.

1
WEEK

Easy Escape from Kuwait

Kuwait is a fascinating country to explore, but as a conservative, flat, dry state, hemmed in by travel-restricted neighbours, it doesn't offer many opportunities to let your hair down. For the complete antithesis of life in **Kuwait City**, take the following trip to Oman and the UAE.

Fly to **Muscat** and enjoy the tolerant, cosmopolitan nature of the city. Spend a day at a beachside hotel and enjoy the novelty of a sea with waves, followed by sun-downers and dancing in a nightclub. On day three be reminded of what mountains and orchards look like by hiking in clear fresh air, blissfully devoid of humidity, on **Jebel Akhdar**.

On day four, fly to **Salalah**, where the subtropical climate, summer greenery, cooler climate and casual atmosphere will remind you of Africa. On day five, visit the spectacular blowholes at **Mugh sail** in a landscape untrammelled by oil pipelines and nodding donkeys. On day six, swap the rural idyll for the urban wild side by flying into **Dubai** for extreme shopping, dining and partying. On day seven, button up the collar for the journey back to **Kuwait City**.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Jenny Walker

Oman Jenny Walker has written extensively on the Middle East in Lonely Planet publications, is a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society. She has a long academic engagement with the region (undergraduate dissertation, postgraduate thesis from Oxford University and current PhD studies at NTU on perception of Arabic Orient). Associate Dean and an executive at Oman's leading engineering college since 2008, Jenny has travelled in 120 countries from Mexico to Mongolia. Jenny also wrote the Plan, Understand and Survival Guide chapters (with the exception of the Hajj).



Anthony Ham

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain Anthony has written more than 100 guidebooks for Lonely Planet, including *Saudi Arabia*, the *Middle East*, *Jordan* and *Iran*, and writes for magazines and newspapers around the world. He has a Masters degree in Middle Eastern politics, has travelled to 16 of the 22 countries of the Arab League and never ceases to be surprised by the kindness of anything-but-ordinary people wherever he goes.



Andrea Schulte-Peevers

UAE Born and raised in Germany and educated in London and at UCLA, Andrea has travelled the distance to the moon and back in her visits to dozens of countries, including several in North Africa and the Middle East. She's authored or contributed to some 90 Lonely Planet titles, including the last edition of this guide, the *Dubai & Abu Dhabi* city guide and the *Pocket Dubai* guide. After years of living in LA, Andrea now happily makes her home in Berlin.

Read more about Anthony at:

lonelyplanet.com/members/anthony_ham

Contributing Writers

Mariam Nihal contributed to the Saudi Arabia chapter.

Robert Wagner contributed to the Saudi Arabia chapter and wrote the Hajj chapter.

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

5th edition – Sept 2016

ISBN 978 1 78657 104 5

© Lonely Planet 2016 Photographs © as indicated 2016

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, and no part of this publication may be sold or hired, without the written permission of the publisher. Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: lonelyplanet.com/ip.

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'