

## OMAN

**Oman** officially the **Sultanate of Oman** is an Arab country in southwest Asia on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders the United Arab Emirates on the northwest, Saudi Arabia on the west and Yemen on the southwest. The coast is formed by the Arabian Sea on the south and east and the Gulf of Oman on the northeast. The country also contains Madha, an exclave enclosed by the United Arab Emirates, and Musandam, an exclave also separated by Emirati territory.

### History

From the 6th century BC to the arrival of Islam in the 7th century AD, Oman was controlled and/or influenced by three Persian dynasties, the Achaemenids, Parthians and Sassanids. Achaemenids in the 6th century BC controlled and influenced the Oman peninsula. This was most likely exerted from a coastal center such as Sohar. On the advent of Islam, the faith reached Oman during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime.

The Portuguese occupied Muscat for a 140-year period 1508–1648, arriving a decade after Vasco Da Gama discovered the seaway to India.

### Geography

A vast gravel desert plain covers most of central Oman, with mountain ranges along the north (al Jebel al Akhdar) and southeast coast, where the country's main cities are also located: the capital city Muscat, Matrah and Sur in the north, and Salalah in the south. Oman's climate is hot and dry in the interior and humid along the coast. During past epochs Oman was covered by ocean. Fossilized shells exist in great numbers in areas of the desert away from the modern coastline. The peninsula of Musandam (Musandem), which has a strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz, is separated from the rest of Oman by the United Arab Emirates and is thus an exclave. The series of small towns known collectively as Dibba are the gateway to the Musandam peninsula on land and the fishing villages of Musandam by sea. Boats may be hired at Khasab for trips into the Musandam peninsula by sea.

### Climate

Annual rainfall in Muscat averages 10 cm (4 in), falling mostly in January. Dhofar is subject to the southwest monsoon, and rainfall up to 64 cm (25 in) has been recorded in the rainy season from late June to October. While the mountain areas receive more plentiful rainfall, some parts of the coast, particularly near the island of Masirah, sometimes receive no rain at all within the course of a year. The climate generally is very hot, with temperatures reaching 54°C (129°F) in the hot season, from May to October.

**Population:** 3,418,085

**Currency:** Omani rials (OMR)

### Living as expat – Housing

Finding a nice place to live is always difficult. Oman is no exception - getting the right accommodation can be hard, especially in large cities. Read our guide to room and flat rental. Check out the classifieds for available property and people looking to share flats.

There's a wide range of apartments and villas available in Oman, both within and outside enclosed compounds, but it should be noted from the outset that expatriates cannot own land or property in Oman and therefore you will have no choice but to rent.

Foreign workers tend to live in either compounds or apartments. The rapid development of the economy and the sudden influx of foreign workers meant that accommodation had to be constructed

quickly, which meant that apartment blocks rather than individual houses were built. The term 'compound' refers to a group of houses or small, usually low-level, apartment blocks within a walled enclosure, rather like a private estate.

The majority of property is rented unfurnished, whether it is a grand villa or a modest studio apartment. 'Unfurnished' might mean only the barest of essentials but is more likely to include a kitchen unit, curtain rails and lighting fixtures or it might mean semi-furnished, with kitchen equipment, a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine.

### **Getting there and around**

There is only one truly international airport in Oman, and that is **Seeb International Airport**.

The intercity buses are operated by **ONTC** which has daily services to/from most of the main provincial towns for OMR 5 or less.

Oman has a comprehensive system of cheap but slow long-distance shared taxis (painted orange and white) and minibuses. Oman's shared taxis and minibuses do not wait until they are full to leave. Instead, drivers pick up and drop off extra passengers along the way.

### **More information**

For more information on Global Relocation Consultants (GRC) expat relocation services and mobility management please visit our website: [www.grconsultants.org](http://www.grconsultants.org)