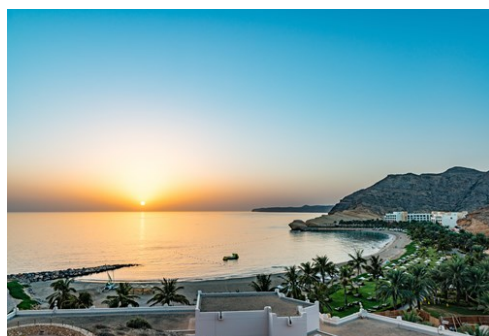




Muscat

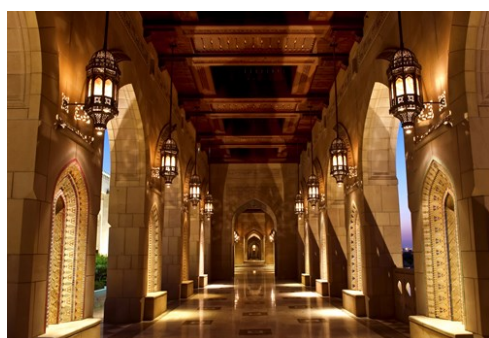
Photo: JPRichard/Shutterstock.com



JPRichard/Shutterstock.com



Ivan Pavlov/Shutterstock.com



Salim Al-Harthy/Shutterstock.com

Nestled between the imposing Al Hajar Mountains and salty waters of the Arabian Sea is Muscat, the cosmopolitan Omani capital. Now home to almost half the country's population, the city is an expat's darling and has a lot to offer in the way of historical sights, culture and entertainment. Muscat has managed to remain relatively concealed from the touristic eye and retains a sense of inwardness and an unspoiled quality long lost by some of its comparable Emirati neighbors.

NOTE: This Guide has been limited to 20 points of interest per section. For the full guide, please visit ArrivalGuides.com

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Destinations in Asia

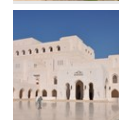
ArrivalGuides

Foto: WhitefoxChen / Shutterstock

Top 5



Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque
Inaugurated just over a decade ago, this contemporary Islamic mosque is, per...



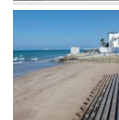
Royal Opera House
The Royal Opera House is a relatively recent, yet critical addition to the O...



Muttrah Corniche
The corniche of Muttrah, one of Muscat's administrative districts and its ma...



Bait Al Zubair Museum
This privately-run museum belongs to the Zubair family, who have over the ye...



Qurum Beach & Natural Park
The family-friendly Qurum Natural Park along with the nearby outstretched be...



THE CITY



A Jellema/Shutterstock.com

What once was three small villages of Muscat, Muttrah and Ruwi today constitutes the modern, ever-growing and very cosmopolitan Omani capital, with each of the three areas still preserving some of their individual flair.

Old Muscat, the historic heart of the city, contains some of the finest Arabian architecture and cultural heritage sites. Old Portuguese forts and historic buildings breathe the charm of foregone ages. The opulent Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, a rather new addition to the local architectural landscape, has grown to become the country's major religious centre and is open to visitors of all convictions.

The scenic, vibrant port area of Muttrah is the place to be right before sundown. A promenade along its seaside Corniche lined with stylish hotels and eateries makes for a perfect kick-start to the evening, to be continued exploring the Muttrah Souq and Muscat's somewhat hushed, but very present nightlife.

Neighboring Ruwi is, perhaps, best explored during daylight hours, when this newly emerged business districts' eclectic make up becomes most apparent.

Some distances might prove too long for walking, but commuting between Muscat's historically detached areas is made easy by omnipresent minibuses and taxis, easily hailed down from any point in the city.

DO & SEE



Permchai Phoorivatana/Shutterstock.com

Muscat's geographical positioning in close proximity to the sea, desert and mountains provides visitors with an endless list of possible activities. With natural beauty, beach resorts, an emerging cultural scene (facilitated much by the recently constructed Royal Opera House) and historical relics, the nation's capital is guaranteed to keep travelers busy both on land (mosques, forts and souqs) and at sea (dolphin-watching tours and snorkeling, to name a few).

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque



Inaugurated just over a decade ago, this contemporary Islamic mosque is, perhaps, the capital's greatest attraction and largest

place of worship. The handwoven prayer hall carpet alone is a site to take in - its 1,700,000,000 knots took 4 years and 600 craftswomen to weave, and the carpet's total weight exceeds a staggering 21 tons. English-language tours are available to visitors.

Photo: Ivan Pavlov/Shutterstock.com

Address: Sultan Qaboos Street, Muscat

Opening hours: Sat-Thurs 8am-11am

More Info: Modest clothing is advised.

Royal Opera House



The Royal Opera House is a relatively recent, yet critical addition to the Omani cultural scene where the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said himself is a regular. Sleek on the outside, the white-stone building boasts elaborate inner décor that serves as backdrop to some of the world's finest performances.

Photo: Claudiovidri/Shutterstock.com

Address: Al Kharjiyah Street, Muscat

Phone: +968 24 403300

Internet: www.rohmuscat.org.om

Muttrah Corniche



The corniche of Muttrah, one of Muscat's administrative districts and its main port area, is an attractive, scenic stretch of land perfect for evening promenades by the water. The local Fish Market and many souqs are just a stone's throw away from here, too.

Photo: Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com

Address: Muttrah, Muscat

Bait Al Zubair Museum



This privately-run museum belongs to the Zubair family, who have over the years carefully put together and maintained a unique collection of Omani cultural artefacts, ranging from coins and household items to ancient weapons and clothing pieces. Souvenirs are available at the adjacent gift shop.

Photo: Step (image cropped)

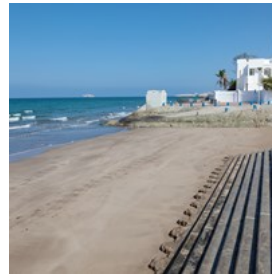
Address: Al-Saidiya Street, Muscat

Opening hours: Sat-Thurs 9.30am-6pm

Phone: +968 24 736688

Internet: www.baitalzubairmuseum.com

Qurum Beach & Natural Park



The family-friendly Qurum Natural Park along with the nearby outstretched beach make for a wonderful summertime day trip. The park is well-maintained, and features kids' play areas aimed at various age groups. Food stalls are scattered around the park, and a few restaurants operate in close proximity to the beach.

Photo: Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com

Address: Quartier de Qurum, Muscat

Sultan's Armed Forces Museum

The museum offers a complex insight into Oman's past and showcases the country's military prowess by displaying all sorts of military equipment, including vehicles, aircrafts and even boats. All visitors are assigned soldier escorts, who are often English-speaking and knowledgeable in military history.

Address: Al Mujamma Street, Muscat

Opening hours: Sun-Thurs 7.30am-1pm, Sat 3-6pm

Phone: +968 24 312 648

Oman Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre



The museum is packed with interactive and informative exhibits, and offers unique insight into Oman's gas and oil production that both kids and adults will find fascinating. Entry is free, and

explanations in Arabic and English accompany the displays.

Photo: Juozas Šalna (image cropped)
Address: Sayh Al-Malih Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 677834
Internet: www.pdo.co.om

Sultan's Palace



Although no tours are offered inside the palace, the building (one of Sultan Qaboos' residences, now used primarily for ceremonial purposes) is worth a quick stop by when touring the nation's capital. Two 16th century forts (Mirani and Jalali) are located on both sides of the palace.

Photo: ChameleonsEye/Shutterstock.com
Address: Al Alam Palace, Muscat

Al Jalali and Mirani Forts



The historic forts of Al Jalali and Mirani date back to the 16th century, and (although closed for entry to the general public) define the cityscape of the Omani capital. The forts were formerly used as defense fortresses, and were constructed by the Portuguese during the colonial period. Come at sundown to capture the best views.

Photo: Ivan Pavlov/Shutterstock.com
Address: Al Jalali/ Al Mirani Forts, Muscat

Dolphin Watching



A few local companies offer dolphin-watching tours, which take travelers on short morning trips out into the sea, where wild dolphins roam free and sometimes present themselves to curious visitors. Some companies also offer fishing and/or snorkeling tours.

Sidab Sea Tours
P.O. Box 131, PC 114

Photo: Ivan Pavlov/Shutterstock.com
Address: Muttrah, Muscat
Phone: +968 99432782
Internet: www.sidabseatours.com
Email: contactus@sidabseatours.com

DINING



Joshua Resnick/Shutterstock.com

Omani cuisine is halal meat-dominated, with Arabian and Indian influences easily traceable. Some of the typical local dishes include grilled meats, shwarma and biryani; Muscat's seaside location makes for a heavy emphasis on seafood in local cuisine as well. Restaurants in Muscat are often located on hotel premises, and cater primarily to expats and tourists (most locals favor cafés over fine dining). The variety of cuisine choices, however, is certainly impressive, and ranges from traditional Omani to Indian,

Pakistani, European and Asian.

D'Arcy's Kitchen MSQ

D'Arcy's Kitchen serves International cuisine (with an emphasis on European - British and Italian in particular) and is a darling favorite of local expats. Open all through the day, the restaurant offers both in- and outdoor seating in a cosy patio.

Address: Al Bashair Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 2469 9119

Bait Al Luban Omani Restaurant

Centrally located right next to the local Fish Market, this restaurant enjoys a spotless reputation and serves authentic Omani cuisine in a romantic setting. Book a table in advance to be seated on the balcony overlooking the sea and majestic Corniche.

Address: Al Mina Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 9457 9457
Internet: www.baitalluban.com

Turkish House Restaurant

This restaurant's extensive menu is not limited to Turkish cuisine alone, and features some of the finest seafood dishes around. Another highlight here is the bread - freshly baked and served warm straight out of the oven. The restaurant is highly popular with patrons - reservations recommended.

Address: Al Hadiqa Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 2448 8071

Begum's

Begum's is a relatively small local eatery that specializes on Indian cuisine and serves mouthwatering byruani, mughlai and much more. Despite its modest size, the place is well-known to locals for consistently serving high-quality food. Seating available in- and

outdoors.

Address: Bawshar Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 9307 2000

The Beach Restaurant at The Chedi Muscat

Located at The Chedi (a luxury resort in the heart of Muscat), The Beach Restaurant offers unbeatable views over the Gulf of Oman and serves exquisite International Fusion dishes with a special emphasis on seafood. With its unbeatable beachfront location and extensive wine list, a visit to the restaurant makes for a very special dining experience.

Address: Al Ghubra, Muscat
Opening hours: Open for dinner service from mid-September till the end of May.
Phone: +968 2452 4343
Internet: www.ghmhotels.com/en/muscat/dining

CAFÉS



Sophie James/Shutterstock.com

Western-style restaurants are a foreign import to Oman, while cafés enjoy a much higher popularity among locals and often make for dining experiences no less tantalizing.

"Shwarma" is, perhaps, the most popular local eat, and is made with roasted beef or chicken wrapped in bread with salad and vegetables. Grilled meats (or "kebabs") are another local specialty, often served with flatbread and hummus. Another dish typical of the area is "biryani", which often simply means chicken leg

with rice and spices. Cafés normally offer a variety of fresh juices to go with a meal, along with coffee ("gahwa") spiced with cardamom and cloves.

Kargeen Caffé

Kargeen Caffé's truly magical atmosphere is created by the lush garden seating area, where guests are served Asian and Middle Eastern dishes (pizza is also on the menu) by friendly staff wearing authentic Omani clothing. try the shawarma, biryani and shuwa (lamb wrapped in banana leaves).

Address: Medinat Qaboos Complex, Muscat

Opening hours: Mon-Sun 7am-1am

Phone: +968 9925 3351

Internet: www.kargeencaffe.com

Super Café Chef A

Conveniently located right by the Corniche, this café offers both local and international foods in a laid-back setting. Seating overlooking the water and the Corniche is available outside. Mains, desserts and drinks (including fresh juices) are served.

Address: 114 Al Bahri Road, Muscat

Phone: +968 9314 1672

Al Makan Café

Al Makan is a great nighttime venue, for it's location on the top floor of the Muscat Grand Mall makes for some stunning views of Muscat at night. Apart from food (a large variety of local dishes served here) Al Makan also offers shisha, hot Moroccan tea and fresh juices.

Address: Dohat Al Adab Street, Muscat

Phone: +968 9149 9645

Fast Food 'n' Juice Centre

The café serves up simple, yet delicious food (burgers and shawarma galore!) and some of the

most decadent smoothies and desserts around. Close proximity to the Mutrah Souk makes this a great place to stop for a quick bite, or even enjoy a longer meal in the outdoor seating area.

Address: Mutrah Corniche, Muscat

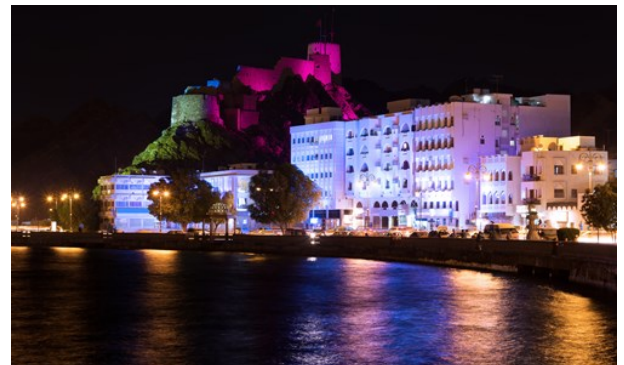
Trattoria Italian Restaurant & Café

This Italian establishment serves up all the delicious classics from pizzas to pastas and soups, along with some decadent cake for dessert to complement your meal. Special emphasis is laid on presentation and service, both of which are of impeccable quality.

Address: Al Assalah Towers, Al Ghubrah, Muscat

Phone: +968 2421 0451

BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Ivan Pavlov/Shutterstock.com

Muscat is an unexpectedly vibrant and photogenic city by night. Taking a stroll along the Corniche or wandering through the Muttrah area may offer a glance into local life hidden from sight during daytime. Those interested in smoking shisha will not find themselves at a loss - cafés that serve shisha are widely available throughout. When it comes to bars and clubs, most local nightlife is limited to hotel premises due to restrictions on sale and consumption of alcohol in the country. However, some hotels do pack a punch, and finding a suitable venue should not pose much difficulty.

Duke's Bar

Located at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Duke's Bar is heralded as one of the finest in Muscat. With its variety of drinks, some food options (fish and chips a popular choice) and unbeatable views over the water, the bar is a perfect venue to unwind while listening to live music (frequently performed by the hotel pool).

Address: Ruwi 112, Muscat

Phone: +968 2466 0660

More Info: Located at the Crowne Plaza Hotel

On the Rocks Restaurant & Lounge

This establishment features an upscale restaurant with an open kitchen, and (being one of the hottest clubbing venues in Muscat) is a great place to stay for your night out. Enjoy a drink in the lounge area (all lit blue!) or hit the dance floor with other local and international party-goers.

Address: Al Marid Street, Muscat

Phone: +968 2434 6765

Feeney's Irish Pub

Feeney's is as good as an Irish Pub can get, with an extensive beer list (bottled and tap available) and some food options on offer (arguably, the best fish and chips in town). A live band normally plays daily from 8.30pm onwards. Smoking inside not allowed.

Address: Located inside Beach Bay Hotel, Muscat

Opening hours: Closes 3pm-6pm

Phone: +968 9295 6547

More Info: Located at Beach Bay Hotel, Muscat, Oman

Al Ghazal Pub

Al Ghazal Pub at the Intercontinental Hotel is one of the not-so-many establishments in Muscat that serves drinks and is open late into the night. Pool tables are available to use free of charge, and sports are often transmitted live on a large

TV screen. Live band performances are frequent. There is a separate smoking room inside.

Address: Al Kharjiya Street, Muscat

Opening hours: 6pm- 3am

Phone: +968 2468 0000

Internet: www.intercontinental.com

More Info: At the Intercontinental Hotel

Trader Vic's

The local installment of Trader Vic's is located at the Intercontinental Hotel in Muscat, and combines dining and entertainment all under the same roof. The cocktails here boast a solid reputation (try the tiki drinks), and salsa dancing often starts later in the night.

Address: Al Kharjiya Street, Muscat

Opening hours: 12pm-1:45am

Phone: +968 2468 0000

Internet: www.intercontinental.com

More Info: At the Intercontinental Hotel

SHOPPING



Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com

Visitors to Muscat are free to choose between an authentic shopping experience in the souqs and modern, air-conditioned shopping malls established in the recent years (primarily in central Muscat and its upmarket suburb of Qurum). The souqs in Muscat and Muttrah are a vibrant, lively experience fit for those ready to haggle and actively pursue great bargains. Clothing, leather goods, local art and

handicrafts, ceramics, gold and jewelry are some of the items on sale in the city's windy souqs. Western-style shopping malls, on the other hand, sell primarily international brand clothing and accessories, and often house grocery stores, food courts and entertainment venues.

Muttrah Souq



The Muttrah Souq is the number one shopping venue in Muscat - a must-visit for first-time travelers to Oman and bargain lovers. Browse through the endless colorful stalls and venture away from the souq's main artery into the smaller side-streets for even better deals. Do not be afraid to haggle - prices can often be brought down to a fraction of the initial amount.

Photo: Riyadh Al Balushi (image cropped)
Address: Muttrah, Muscat

Muscat Grand Mall



The mall's impressive size lives up to the "grand" part in its name. Local and international brands, a large variety of eateries, a cinema and an international chain supermarket are all contained under one roof here. The top floor boasts a cosy shisha bar perfect for the after hours.

Photo: nenetus/Shutterstock.com
Address: Dohat Al Adab Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 24 498611
Internet: www.muscatgrandmall.com

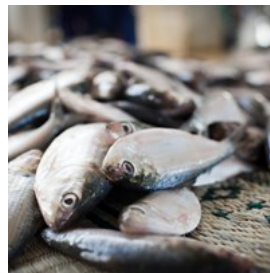
Oman Avenues Mall



Located right across the road from the Muscat Gran Mall, the Avenues is home to middle- and upmarket brands. The mall features an impressive food court with everything from pizza to sushi on offer. There is a hyper market inside with one of the widest selections of groceries on the city, and children's entertainment areas are available as well.

Photo: Pressmaster/Shutterstock.com
Address: Sultan Qaboos Street, Muscat
Phone: +968 22005420
Internet: www.omanavenuesmall.om

Fish Market



If time allows, devote one morning to exploring the local Fish Market - a sight to remember even if you're not planning on buying. All sorts of marine creatures are on display here, and - if you're lucky - you might even spot a real shark at one of the stalls.

Photo: lightpoet/Shutterstock.com
Address: Port Corniche, Muscat
More Info: Best visited early in the morning

Bateel



Bateel creates edible masterpieces with humble dates, elevating them from an everyday local snack to an exquisite dessert fit for a king. A visit to Bateel is guaranteed to help with gift ideas for loved ones back home. Prices and product quality are above average.

Photo: kentoh/Shutterstock.com

Address: Shatti al Qurm, Muscat

Phone: +968 24 601572

Internet: www.bateel.com

More Info: Oasis by the Sea Complex

ACCOMODATION



Alan Lucas/Shutterstock.com

High-end hotels and beach resorts of the Qurm and Al Khuwair areas are mostly well-known for their consistently good quality and still uninflated prices, while smaller inns and guest houses of the Muttrah district offer a variety of options to pick and choose from for travelers on a budget.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION



PlusONE/Shutterstock.com

Muscat International Airport



The Muscat International Airport is the largest in Oman, and is located 32km away from the city. Some hotels in Muscat arrange courtesy shuttles

for guests and offer pick-up services directly at the airport.

The most convenient way of getting to Muscat on one's own is by taxi. Fares should be agreed upon prior to departure; paying in advance directly at the airport taxi counter is also possible.

To reach the city by public transport travelers can use buses run by the Oman National Transport Company. There is a stop on Sultan Qaboos Highway, which is a short (200m) walk away from the airport.

Photo: Juan Garces

Address: Muscat, Oman

Phone: +968 2451 9223

Internet: www.omanairports.co.om

Public Transport



Travellers can choose between several transportation options in Muscat. The first, so-called "Baiza" buses, circulate regularly

around the metropolitan area picking up and dropping off passengers at various locations. These can be flagged down anywhere, and often do not have a visible indication of the destination, so enquiring with the driver is recommended. Fare is paid on board and is usually very low.

A pricier, but, perhaps, more convenient transportation option are the white-and-orange minibuses (local taxis) that are readily available throughout. These can be shared with other passengers to decrease costs. It is customary for these minibuses to pick up passengers that are not headed for the same destination, and make several drop-off stops en route. Fares should be agreed upon before boarding.

Buses run by the ONTC (Oman National Transport Corporation) are another, less popular option for getting around. These buses stop at designated locations only, and run less frequently. The main bus depot is based in Ruwi. Bus connections are available to a variety of destinations, including Muscat International Airport, Port Sultan Qaboos, Wadi Adei, Wadi Kabir, Mabelah, Muttrah, Al Almerat and the main residential areas of Muscat.

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair
Phone: +968 2412 1555
Internet: www.mwasalat.om
Email: info@ontcoman.com

Taxi



Taxis are widely available throughout the city of Muscat, and are easy to spot by their white and orange color scheme. Fares should be agreed

upon prior to boarding.

Some local taxi companies include:

Allo Taxi
+968 24697997

City Taxi
+968 95103152

KMS Taxi
+968 99331397

Saud Taxi
+968 96600955

Post Office



The Central Post Office is located next to Muscat International Airport, off Sultan Qaboos Highway. Other post offices are available throughout

Muscat, and often do not have an exact address. Post offices can be found next to the British Bank in Muscat, in the Ruwi Commercial area near the Telecommunications Company, on the Muttrah Hospital campus and at further locations (listed on the website). Post cards and stamps can be purchased throughout the city (at various shops in the Muttrah Souq, for example).

Photo: Andy Fuchs
Address: Muscat, Oman
Opening hours: Sun-Thurs 7.30am-2.30pm
Phone: +968 2451 0343
Internet: www.omanpost.om

Pharmacy



Pharmacies are available throughout the city. Muscat Pharmacy City Centre Mall (next to the airport) +968 24558704 Al Ghobra, Nr. Al Maha

Filling Station
+968 24497264
(Open 24 hours)

Al Sarooj Commercial Centre

+968 24695536
(Open 24 hours)

Ruwi (opp. Police station)
+968 24794186 / + 968 24791144 / +968
24702542
(Open 24 hours)

Photo: Gemma Garner
Address: City Centre Mall, Muscat
Phone: +968 2455 8704
Internet: www.muscatpharmacy.net/outlets

Telephone

Area code +968



Photo: Jardson Almeida

Electricity

220-240 Volts, British
three-pin socket



Photo: Stirling Tschan

Population

1,310,826

Currency

Omani rial (1 Omani Rial = 2.33 Euro)

Opening hours

Most governmental offices and government-run facilities (including post offices and museums) open and close early (7.30am-2.30pm). Commercial establishments and local businesses have longer working hours and often operate late into the night, but often close for mid-day break between 3pm and 6pm.

Newspapers

Oman Daily Observer

Oman Tribune
Muscat Daily
TheWeek (published Wednesdays)
Times of Oman

Emergency numbers

Police/Fire/Ambulance: 9999

Tourist information

Ministry of Tourism
Call Centre: +968 80077799
Phone: +968 22088000
Sun-Thurs 7.30am-2.30pm

P.O. Box 200, P. C. 115
Madinat Al-Sultan Qaboos
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman