

# HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



## QATAR, OMAN & JORDAN

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 3, 2022

### DETAILED ITINERARY

## SCHEDULE BY DAY

*B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner*

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23

#### DEPART U.S.

Depart the U.S. on independent flights to Doha, Qatar.

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 24

#### ARRIVE DOHA, QATAR

Arrive in Doha and transfer to your hotel.

Depart for an excursion to the UNESCO World Heritage site, Al Zubarah Fort.

Learn about the vital role the country played supporting the fishing and pearl-diving trades. Qatar's seafaring past comes to life at UNESCO World Heritage site Al Zubarah Fort in the northwest. Just over an hour from Doha, the ancient fort stands at the ruins of Zubarah – one of the region's best-preserved examples of a pearling and fishing port, dating back to the 18th century. The site offers rare insights into how life was once lived in a traditional fishing village, with remains of a city wall, ancient residential palaces, markets, and mosques. A museum at the fort tells the story of the settlement, while a new viewing platform is planned for one of the towers to offer panoramas of the surrounding desert. Accompanying us will be our local guide, Siham.

Dinner is at the Fuego Restaurant.

Overnight: JW Marriott (D)

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25

#### DOHA

This morning visit the Museum of Islamic Art, which rises like a sentinel out of the sea. This brilliant museum designed by architect I.M. Pei houses an outstanding collection of Islamic Art. Just offshore, on its own man-made island, this stone ziggurat floats above the blue waters and contains many of the distinguishing elements of traditional Islamic culture: carved stone, domes, archways, fountains, and courtyards overlooking the Arabian Gulf and is probably one of the most significant buildings of Pei's career.

After lunch, exploring Doha. Drive by the Aspire Zone, a unique sport, sports medicine, research, and education destination for the international sports industry. One of their principal projects is the redevelopment of the Khalifa Stadium. This stadium will be used to host some matches of the World Cup 2022 and is undergoing redevelopment to be compliant with FIFA's stadium requirements.

Stop at the Al Shaqab Racing stables and club. Al Shaqab is the region's leading equine education resource center and features the breeding of Arabian horses. It has won many of the biggest events in Europe and recently started operations in the United States.

Continue to the Pearl, one of the largest real-estate developments in the Middle East. The Pearl is an impressive island in Doha's plush West Bay district. Shaped like a pearl, the exclusive isle is home to some of the city's best restaurants, boutiques, and hotels.

Return to the hotel for some free time this afternoon.

In the evening, visit the Souk Waqif. Historically, this was the spot where the Bedouin would bring their sheep, goats, and wool to trade for necessities. An

enormous reconstruction project has resulted in a traditional looking souk with mud-rendered shops and exposed timber beams. While in the souk, visit a local falcon shop to learn more about this popular sport.

Enjoy a local dinner this evening at Souk Waqif at the Al Bandar Restaurant.

Overnight: *JW Marriott* (B, L, D)

## **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26**

### **DOHA**

Enjoy a morning visit to the National Museum of Qatar, which opened in March 2019 and is yet another stunning new architectural highlight along Doha's already spectacular waterfront.

After lunch drive to Education City where the Qatar Foundation is trying to reform Qatar's education system. They are leading the drive to revive scientific excellence and have pledged millions of dollars for research. Explore the 2,500-acre campus where Cornell Medical School, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown University, and Texas A&M are already teaching a new generation of Qataris and Gulf residents. The campus is revolutionary in the sense that men and women will study together for degrees granted by U.S. institutions.

Also stop at the National Library of Qatar, which opened in 2018 and was designed by OMA with Rem Koolhaas. It encompasses the national library, the public library, the university library, and the heritage collection, which consists of valuable texts and manuscripts related to the Arab-Islamic civilization.

Return to the hotel for a free evening.

Overnight: *JW Marriott* (B, L)

## **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27**

### **MUSCAT**

Depart this morning on your flight to Muscat.

Begin exploring the capital city of Muscat, which was historically the link between East and West, Arabia and Africa. Muscat is made up of three cities: Muscat, Mutrah, and Ruwi. Worldwide, her merchants traded in the commodities of civilization, such as frankincense, myrrh, and silk, as well as gold,

spices, and coffee. For many centuries the people of Muscat have provided, as they do now, the food, water, and cargoes for visiting ships.

Explore the newly opened National Museum, located across from the Sultan's Palace. Space, light, and height have been used in this contemporary building to enhance the selective displays showcasing the heritage of Oman.

Close by is Mutrah Harbor where fine old merchant houses can be found next to the fish market.

Wandering through Mutrah Souk, women are dressed in brightly colored kanga cloths from East Africa indicating their African ancestry.

Drive past the Sohar, a replica 9<sup>th</sup>-century boat that the British explorer Tim Severin sailed 6,000 miles across the Indian Ocean from Muscat to Canton. The boat was named after the hometown of Oman's most famous sailor, Sinbad, and retraced the ancient silk route between Arabia, India, Southeast Asia, and China.

Check into the Grand Hyatt Hotel.

Dinner at the hotel this evening.

Overnight: *Grand Hyatt Hotel* (B, L, D)

## **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28**

### **MUSCAT**

Depart the hotel to explore Oman's majestic landscapes in the region of Ad Dakhiliyah. Stop at the city's wonderful Grand Mosque, a superb example of contemporary Islamic architecture. The mosque, which can accommodate more than 20,000 worshippers, truly matches India's Taj Mahal in its architectural exquisiteness. Construction on the mosque was begun in 1995 and it was formally opened in May of 2001. The inaugural ceremony, which took place at the main prayer hall, was marked by the largest ever congregation of Islamic scholars, researchers, and historians in Oman.

Continue on to explore Oman's interior. Leaving the city, you will quickly notice a number of date farms and small forts nestled in among the dark hills and mountains give it a distinctive look but it's not just its appearance that makes it special. Inhabited constantly from ancient times until today, it has one of the richest histories not just in Oman but the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. In almost every

village, town, and city in Oman, you'll find a long deep path of water running through houses, streets, and farms. This is known locally as the 'falaj' and is the sophisticated ancient main irrigation system in the country that has existed since 500 AD. The falaj system collects water from nearby mountain in irrigation ditches and brings them to villages. This water is used to irrigate dense groves of date palms, a source of food and exports in Oman. Enjoy a walk through date and banana plantations and admire the wonderful mud-brick homes. Many of these are being abandoned as people move into concrete structures outside of the village.

After lunch at Nizwa continue onto Jabrin. Despite its imposing battlements, the fort was originally built as a palace. Its construction was ordered in the mid-to late-17<sup>th</sup> century by Imam Bal'arab Bin Sultan Al-Ya'ribi, who is also buried there. The design was only later modified to fortify the building. The Omanis have done an excellent job of restoring this site, and it is possible to really get a sense of medieval Oman.

Return to Muscat stopping at Birkat Al Mawz – a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Return to the hotel for a free evening.

Dinner is at leisure this evening.

Overnight: *Grand Hyatt Hotel* (B, L)

## **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29**

### **MUSCAT / AMMAN**

Depart the hotel this morning for a tour of the Royal Opera House Muscat, which opened in 2011 and was designed by the same architects as the Grand Mosque.

Enjoy a traditional lunch at Kargeens.

Depart on a non-stop flight to Amman.

Dinner this evening is at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature at the Wild Jordan Center.

Overnight: *InterContinental Amman* (B, L, D)

## **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30**

### **AMMAN**

*Please bring sun hat, sunscreen, bottled water, and passport today.*

In the morning, enjoy a walking tour in the old part of Amman. Begin at the Citadel, where the focus is the 8<sup>th</sup>-century Umayyad palace, a large complex built as the residence and administrative base of the Governor or Emir. Continue to Jordan Archaeological Museum, which offers the complete history of Amman's region. Admire the Roman Temple of Hercules that stands in front of the museum and was built during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 AD).

Continue to the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR) to learn more about the organization, which is committed to the preservation of sites that are of particular significance to Jordan's cultural heritage.

Drive north to Jerash. Upon arrival enjoy a locally prepared lunch with Professors Hani Hayajneh and Zeidan Kefafi of Yarmouk University.

After lunch begin exploring the site of Jerash. In its heyday, it is estimated that Jerash had a population of around 20,000 people and, although it was not on any of the main trade routes, its citizens prospered from the rich soil of the Gilead hills that surround it. This fertile region is described in the Bible as producing cereals, olives, vines, oak, and pine. Jerash came to prominence during the Hellenistic period and in Roman times it was a prosperous city of the Decapolis. Excavations have revealed two theaters, an unusual oval-shaped forum, temples, churches, a marketplace, and baths. A sense of grace and proportion make this site a pleasure to explore.

Return to the hotel in the late afternoon.

Enjoy dinner at El Romero.

Overnight: *InterContinental Amman* (B, L, D)

## **MONDAY, OCTOBER 31**

### **PETRA**

Depart the hotel early this morning to Petra, stopping first at Mt. Nebo, where Moses is said to be buried. On a clear day it is possible to see the Dead Sea and the spires of the churches in Jerusalem. A group of Franciscan monks bought the site in the 1930s and have excavated the ruins of a church and monastery. Although little remains of the buildings that housed them, there are some spectacular mosaics.

Next stop at Madaba at a small craft center where men and women with special needs create replicas of well-known mosaics. Also visit the Madaba Archaeological Park and view the famous 6<sup>th</sup>-century map of Palestine, which is in the form of a mosaic.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

En route to Petra, drive one hour and stop at the relatively unvisited site of Um Rassas, located 30 kilometers southeast of Madaba. The Roman fortress, originally a Nabatean city, is a square walled town with very high walls supported by towers. Excavations here have uncovered some of the finest Byzantine church mosaics in the Middle East.

Continue 2.5 hours to Petra and check-in to the hotel.

Dinner is at the hotel this evening.

Overnight: *Marriott Hotel Petra* (B, L, D)

## **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1**

### **PETRA**

Depart the hotel early for Petra, one of the most spectacular archaeological sites of the Middle East.

Spend the morning exploring the ruins including the Amphitheater, the Royal Tombs, and the Temple of the Winged Lions.

Enjoy lunch at the Basin Restaurant on the site of Petra.

After lunch, take an optional hike up to the Deir Plateau (800 steps one way) for wonderful views. Admire the great façade of the Deir (similar to the Treasury) which is indeed, as Edward Lear so aptly wrote, “a fit crown to the marvels of the ascent”. Please note this option includes 800 steps one-way or the High Place (550 feet) above the Basin. For anyone who does not wish to climb, the rest of the afternoon is at leisure.

After Petra closes, visit the newly opened Petra Museum.

Return to the hotel.

Dinner tonight is at Petra Kitchen where you’ll watch local chefs prepare traditional dishes using fresh ingredients.

Overnight: *Marriott Hotel Petra* (B, L, D)

## **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2**

### **WADI RUM / DEAD SEA**

Depart early this morning and drive to Wadi Rum where huge pillars of sandstone rock rise from the sandy desert floor, towering to heights of over 1,500 meters.

Enjoy a one-hour jeep ride into this landscape made famous as the setting of David Lean’s epic film *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The dramatic combination of massive rocks and canyons, sandstone over basalt, and granite weathered into weird shapes and colors surrounded by desert sands, rivals Petra in its beauty.

Head back towards Amman for lunch.

After lunch continue to the *Kempinski Hotel Ishtar*.

In the late afternoon experience the Dead Sea, the lowest place on the earth’s surface. Though many large wadi systems empty their silty floodwaters from the surrounding mountains here, there is no outlet for the water. Combined with hot air temperatures, this produces a high rate of evaporation – almost 10 million tons of water per day. The evaporation leaves a mixture of salts and minerals close to saturation point, giving the sea its glutinous surface.

Enjoy a special farewell dinner this evening.

Overnight: *Kempinski Hotel Ishtar* (B, L, D)

## **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3**

### **RETURN HOME**

This morning, transfer to the airport for your independent flights home (B).