

Muttrah Souq

In the heart of the city, a tall arch frames the entrance to the entrance of Muttrah Souq, the oldest and by far the most well known in Oman. Here the old and the new mingle and the present revisits the past as visitors throng its quaint and charming interiors.

The Souq is a shoppers' delight offering anything from wallets for R.O. 1 to antique khanjars for R.O. 1000. Frankincense, silverware, antiques and garments are most sought after items.

The Souq retains much of its old world charm with row upon row of matchbox size shops, set in winding tiny lanes under a palm-frond canopied roof. Here, Bedouin women in traditional dress sell the fragrant aromas known as "Bukhoor," combining various raw materials such as sandalwood, frankincense and natural oils.

You can purchase souvenirs like Khanjars and coffee pots, Bedouin jewelry, clothing (dishdashas, kummas (caps), massar (turban) and khanjar for the men; dishdashas, surwal (trousers), lihaff (shawl) for the women).

The Souq is best enjoyed when you can take your time to take in all the sights and sounds. It is least crowded in the mornings and late afternoon and busiest in the evening hours after 6 pm. You will find that types of stores tend to cluster together. Therefore you will find all the gold souqs in one area, antiquities in another, textiles in yet another, and so on. The prices for most items are negotiable and haggling is a long standing tradition. As a rule of thumb, however, it is not necessary to haggle for anything less than one rial. Even if you don't buy anything, the souq is well worth a visit to see the lifestyle of a bygone time.

Modern replica Souqs

In the Sabco Centre mall and The Capital Commercial Centre you can find upscale replicas of the traditional souq. Here, merchandise is a combination of authentic artifacts, cheap reproductions (kitsch) and trendy items usually reserved for the malls (such as perfume, watches and knick-knacks. Even here do not hesitate to negotiate on prices.

Nizwa Souq

Nizwa Souq is about a two-hour drive from Muscat. Here outside the renovated fort stands the central market. Here you can purchase antiquities, pottery and silver jewellery. Nizwa silver craft is considered to be the best in the country. As always you can haggle for your purchase and you may be surprised at the deals you can find.

On any day of the week you can experience the usual hustle-bustle of the traditional markets selling fruits and vegetables, spices, meat and fish. But on fridays everyone in the town gathers early in the morning at the goat walk at the far end of the Souq to purchase livestock from the local farmers. Cows goats and sheep are offered for inspection and purchase. The scene is invariably crowded and busy and provides travelers with an excellent opportunity to observe local customs.

Sinaw Souq

Set between the Wahibah Sands and the edge of the Empty Quarter, Sinaw surprisingly show a lot of activity for an outpost town, because here is where the Bedouins come to do business. In the heart of the city in the square behind the green doors, all the hustly and bustle of a Middle Eastern market are at its finest. It is very easy to get caught up in the spirit. Just watch yourself, though. You might find yourself going home with a newly purchased racing camel.

Ibra Wednesday Souq

Ladies, here is your chance to prove your shopping mettle at the Wednesday Souq in Ibra. Why? because it's an all-women affair. No men allowed. So ditch your significant other and come to Ibra. Handicrafts, utensils and textiles are the main features here.

Al Hafah Souq (Salalah)

Nestled in the coconut groves on Salalah's south side is a cozy souq in the Al Hafah section of town. Here are textile shops, gold and silver souqs and probably best of all, perfumeries where you can find frankincense, and bokhur that will send your olfactory senses sailing. All the accoutrements are available as well-burners and charcoal. There are several local cafe's serving up the best in local snacks and tidbits-mishkak, hummus, etc.

Muttrah - Bringing old-world charm into today's shopping

Oman's ancient trading port Muttrah has many attractions for the modern-day visitor. There is Muttrah Fort, one of the 13 forts dotting the area.