

A Conceptual Paper on Heritage Tourism in Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract: *Tourism in Oman is a booming sector, in the recent years; statistics have shown that the numbers of tourists are rapidly elevating each year. Oman is a country in the middle-east which is a mountainous landscape surrounded by rocky terrains and turquoise beaches, a perfect masterpiece created by nature. Its azure beaches, bright sunlight, palm-fringed beaches and mountains are a perfect haven for those looking forward to relax, rejuvenate and have a holiday of lifetime. Its picturesque locations are a treat to the eye and demand the attention of shutterbugs. Oman as a country can be called as a home away from home. It's warm, amiable denizens will make one feel at comfort. It's a country which anybody would like to return to and fall in love with its traditional flavors all over again. Oman as a country of history attracts many tourists each year, with the famous cultural and heritage icons being the forts in Oman.*

Keywords: *Tourism, culture, heritage, Oman*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a travel for recreation, a religious, leisure or family or business purpose which is usually for a limited period of time. Tourism is commonly associated with international travel, but it also includes traveling within the same native country too. According to the UNWTO¹ definition tourist as "People traveling and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes".

Tourism has become popular worldwide. International tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments. It has become a major source of income today for many countries and it affects the economy of both the source and host countries. Since the past two decades tourism has been rapidly expanding all over the GCC countries. Not only are the GCC countries diversifying from being just oil dependent but also they are offering a wide variety of choices in the tourism industry.

Oman is a country in the middle-east which is a mountainous landscape surrounded by rocky terrains and turquoise beaches, a perfect masterpiece created by nature. Its azure beaches, bright sunlight, palm-fringed beaches and mountains are a perfect haven for those looking forward to relax, rejuvenate and have a holiday of lifetime. Its picturesque locations are a treat to the eye and demand the attention of shutterbugs. With extreme climatic conditions, it is advisable to visit the country between the months of September and April.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States² defines heritage tourism as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past," and "heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources."

Oman has many beautiful places and areas because of its location Oman is different from the rest of world, it is considered as the middle of a gateway between the Eastern world and the west, that Oman is in the environmental diversity of the plains and the mountain and the coast, there monsoon spray of rain and clouds in the autumn season in Dhofar region. Oman being peaceful and serene, economic and political conditions are favorable which acts as a catalyst in bringing tourists to Oman and also, the easy availability of tourist visa and constraint free legal procedures are the major enablers.

Voted as the second best country to visit in the world by the renowned travel guide Lonely Planet in the year 2012, Oman has a network of well-connected roads and highways, and it's an absolute pleasure to drive on Oman's tar. Hospitality towards guests is one element which tourists can look forward for. The Omani sweets such as Bakhhlava, aush-bulbul, etc. are a pleasure to the senses.

The Dhofar govern ate is the home of Salalah, a lush green heaven, also known as “Mini Kerala in Inida”, it is a get away for those wanting a respite from the usual humid climate of Muscat. Its cool climate acts as life giving force to abundant plantations such as Plantains, coconuts, vegetables, etc .There are many places of tourism in Salalah, such as the tomb of Prophet Ayub and Imran (peace be upon him), and there are plains and the mountains, such as the stone mountains, green mountain in the state of Nizwa in height more than ten thousand feet above sea level and is one of the most beautiful tourist attractions, where famed diversity of agriculture lies.

Wadi Bani Khalid, is a popular tourist spot for dune bashing. Camel rides are also is very commonly seen, camping, adventurous spirits. The tourist can peg their tents and sleep under the dark blanket of starry sky. The rural way of living in the lands of Bedouins will definitely entice every visitor.

Before leaving Oman, Souvenirs can be purchased for near and dear ones back home. Dry fruits, Shawls, mussars, halwa, kahwa or a silver Khanjar or traditional accessories with intricate patterns, Omani Perfume, frankincense, etc are all which can be purchased as a remembrance of Oman.

2. FORTS, HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND BEACHES IN OMAN

Forts and beaches in Oman are an important symbol of Oman. There are many forts in Oman. And also Oman is abundantly blessed with beaches. Oman’s forts were built by the previous rulers they are a part of Oman’s ancient history also they were centers of administrative and political discussions. Nearly every Omani city and town has it own fort. The Al-Yarubi dynasty rule in Oman marked the expansion and development of forts between 1624 and 1744. They represent Oman, its customs and traditions standing majestically over many feet, forts have major role to play. Many forts are there in Oman like the Bahla fort, which is in the Dhakiliya region. Also its name added in World

The fort includes a Bahla Oasis with many souks, old mosques and alleys and it wall whose distance is 13 Kilometer. There is also Al-Fikayn Fort, which lies in Wilayt Manah in A’Dakiliya Govern ate. It has four storey, from which tourist can see all the beautiful surrounding. It is famous for unique architecture. Also, the Al-Matek baush in Wilayat Manah used in old times for colouring clothes and extract anti-toxin medicine.

³ “Oman's heritage features a famous sea-faring tradition, as one would expect from a country with 3,165 Km of coastline. Many museums and galleries around the secluded and historic harbors in Oman illuminate the significance of the sea throughout Oman's 5,000 year-old history”.

The Nizwa fort has seven staircases, seven interior wells and so many trap doors from which army put boiling oil and date syrup on enemies. Also there are many canons.

When it comes to beaches, Oman has many beautiful pristine beaches. One can go for swimming, snorkeling, deep-sea diving under expert supervision. The Qurum beach is lined with high class restaurants and cafes. The fishermen will offer boating rides and excursions along the peaceful coastline. One can go for jogging or walking with the sunrise. Oman has a variety of coastal reefs and lagoons. It is a home for variety of fishes and aquatic animals. Like for example, to see the turtles, one can visit the Ras-Al Hadd turtle beach where the turtles lay their eggs and have made their homes. Oman also provides many beach resorts where one can stay close to the waters and have an experience of lifetime.

The Al-Sawadi beach resort is one such location. Then there is Qantab beach which lies at a distance that can be covered by long winding roads. The Seeb beach is also one such famous attraction which is surrounded by a souq, that has many type of products like beauty items, frankincense, Omani spices, locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, fishes, beautiful Omani dresses, abayas, and much more. For, having a more deeper flavour of Oman, there is the Muttrah Corniche and souq, where the seaside is a lovely display of colours and beauty. One can simply sit and watch the sea and the sky horizon. We can say that, Oman as a country is a wonderful experience. It has everything a tourist can wish for.

3. CULTURAL FESTIVALS IN OMAN

The most popular festival in Oman is the Muscat-Festival .A plethora of fun, entertainment, games, music and lots to offer for people from all ages and all walks of life. Usually held between the months of January and February, it attracts millions of visitors around the globe. Traditional Omani handicrafts are made using the old weaving methods and various merchandise are put up for sale,

giving the visitors a glimpse of the beautiful Omani history. Khanjars, Majmars, Abayas, Halwa, Bakhur, etc are an integral part of Omani culture, which speaks of a glorious past. Exhibitors from over a 100 countries participate to showcase their goods. All kinds of stalls and knick-knacks are displayed. Simple consumer goods, convenience goods and luxury goods are available in all shapes and sizes.

Besides Muscat Festival, the next most important event in Oman is the Salalah Tourism Festival. Held between mid-July to the end of August, it marks the commencement of Khareef which is the celebration of Monsoon season. Gulf-nationals, expatriates and many tourists of various nationalities flock to the festival to soak in the wonderful greenery of the place and gaiety of the festival.

Over the years, the government has taken the endeavor to continuously develop the infrastructure of the festival thus encouraging many shopping hubs, contests and much more for the visitors. There is something to offer for each visitor. One can choose from the gold souq those who adore the yellow metal. And the die-hard fans of aromatherapy can choose from a prominent line of frankincense, which the lands of Dhofar Govern ate are blessed with.

4. CONCLUSION

Oman is a country with a prosperous history. It is a beautiful panorama where the colours of history are interspersed with the colours of modernity. It prides itself to be a nation that has preserved each element of its ancestors, its heritage and cultural identity and its uniqueness along with rapid evolution of changing times.

Heritage tourism provides the dimensions to gain economic benefits along with safeguarding the traditional culture associated with it. This sector of tourism is gaining momentum as the Government, organizations and people are realizing the importance of maintaining and conserving the natural environment. In order to be more successful in terms of capturing more tourists in the country, Oman needs to promote its tourism across the countries and make its impact on the global tourism map.

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