**Day 1:** We leave London for a flight to Muscat, the capital city of Oman. On arrival, we transfer to a hotel in Muscat for a two-night stay.

**Day 2:** Our tour starts with some birding around Muscat which is situated on the coast against a spectacular backdrop of impressive mountains. Our first stop is the shallow pools and scrub at Al Qurm Park. The park is surrounded by housing developments and offers us good birding opportunities. Al Qurm attracts a variety of wildfowl and waders – Ruddy Shelduck, Red-wattled and White-tailed Lapwings, Pacific Golden Plover and Temminck’s Stint. Trees and scrub host White-cheeked Bulbuls and Purple Sunbirds. Migrant Isabelline Shrikes are likely to be present, whilst other possibilities include Grey Francolin and Indian Pond Heron. Nearby, a beach and tidal creek holds Western Reef Heron and a variety of gulls and terns including Sooty Gull, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. In the afternoon, we head inland to Al Amerat where we visit a rubbish dump, not the most attractive of locations but superb for raptors. Instead of the gulls that would frequent a European rubbish dump, here we find large numbers of Egyptian Vultures picking through the rubbish. Lappet-faced Vultures are regular whilst eagles include Steppe, Greater Spotted, and Eastern Imperial. We have the opportunity to study these magnificent birds at close range. Desert Larks and African Rock Martins are also present with Hume’s Wheatear, a speciality of the region.

**Day 3:** This morning we take a short boat trip out to the island of Al Fahl where we look for Sooty Falcon. This species times its breeding season to coincide with the autumn migration in order that it can feed its young on tired migrants passing through the area. Al Fahl is a regular site for Red-billed Tropicbird and we hope to see this sought-after species. Other seabirds we may find include Persian Shearwater, Arctic and Pomarine Skuas and Red-necked Phalarope. In the afternoon, we head to Sur in the extreme north-east of the country where we have a two-night stay.

**Day 4:** This morning we visit Khawr Jirama, an excellent site for Crab Plover. A variety of other waders occur including Broad-billed and Terek Sandpipers. Later, we visit the headland of Ras al Hadd where seabirds pass offshore. We have a reasonable
chance of locating Jouanin’s Petrel, Persian, Pale-footed and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Masked Booby. After sunset, along with a local guide, we visit a beach where turtles can be seen coming to lay their eggs.

**Day 5:** Travel back to Muscat for an afternoon flight to Salalah, the second city of Oman, situated in the extreme southern part of the country.

**Days 6-11:** We spend each day exploring a variety of sites in the Salalah region. The mountains rise up steeply from a narrow coastal plain and constitute a sector of a region called Dhofar. The area has a surprisingly rich habitat of lush vegetation compared to the rest of Oman. Dhofar is home to an interesting mix of birds with primarily Afro-tropical ranges and a number of species endemic to south-west Arabia.

Small, well-vegetated valleys are home to Shining Sunbird, White-breasted White-eye, African Paradise Flycatcher, Black-crowned Tchagra, Blackstart and African Rock Bunting. Underneath the trees and scrub, we search for coveys of Arabian Partridges.

At Ayn Hamran the valley is overlooked by towering cliffs, home to Tristram’s Grackles, Fan-tailed Ravens and raptors that could include Steppe, Short-toed and Booted Eagles and the uncommon Verreaux’s Eagle. At Ayn Razat we look in fruiting trees for Bruce’s Green Pigeon whilst nearby scrub is prime habitat for Arabian Warbler. A few kilometres inland, there is a plateau where we search for South Arabian Wheatear. Nearby, a spectacular sinkhole has Bonelli’s Eagle and Yemen Serin, the latter species only recently discovered in Oman. On one evening we go in search of African Scops Owl, a species that is fairly common around Salalah.

The coastline near Salalah is dotted with small lakes and creeks that are attractive to a wide variety of wetland species. We should find herons and egrets, waders and wildfowl. Some of the more interesting species include a number of Asian birds on the extreme western edge of their range – Yellow Bittern, Intermediate Egret, White-breasted Waterhen, Cotton Teal and Pheasant-tailed Jacana. Areas of reeds are home to Clamorous Reed Warblers and win-
tering Bluethroats and small pools hold Baillon’s, Spotted and Little Crakes. A few African species occur here on a regular basis with Abdim’s Stork, Barbary Falcon, African Silverbill and Rüppell’s Weaver being possible. On another day we hope to arrange a boat trip offshore in search of seabirds. Brown Booby, Jouanin’s Petrel, Persian Shearwater, Red-necked Phalarope and a variety of terns, possibly including Bridled and White-cheeked should be present.

On one day we drive inland and head through the barren desert to the oasis at Qatbit. This area regularly hosts Spotted Sandgrouse although their appearance can sometimes be a little erratic. Desert Warbler and Hoopoe Lark occur here. Our main interest is the planted areas of trees, an excellent migrant trap where a number of Omani rarities have been located. Species observed in recent years have included Forest Wagtail, Olive-backed Pipit and Asian Koel, but almost anything could turn up. Nearby is a site that has been a regular location for Grey Hypocolius in recent years and if we are lucky we might find this highly desirable and unpredictable bird.

After an overnight stay at Qatbit and a morning’s birding in the area, we return to Salalah.

Day 12: Morning flight back to Muscat and, on arrival, head northwards to Sohar for two nights. Our journey takes us along the well cultivated coastal plain of Al Batinah and we make stops for birds at one or two locations en route.

Day 13: This morning we drive north to Khatmat Milahah, a flat gravel plain with scattered acacias on the border with the UAE. This area is a reliable location for Plain Leaf Warbler and Eastern Pied Wheatear, both of which we hope have just arrived for the winter. Other birds we might find in the area include Indian Roller, Black Redstart, Ménétries’s Warbler, Desert Warbler, Desert Lesser Whitethroat, Desert and Red-tailed Wheatears. Later, we visit an area of mangroves where we hope to find White-collared Kingfisher of the local form kalbaensis. In the afternoon, we visit the sun farm at Sohar. This area of irrigated fields is an oasis of greenery that acts as a magnet to a wide variety of birds including migrants. Grassy fields are especially attractive to Water, Red-throated and Tawny Pipits and scarcer species in Richard’s and Blyth’s Pipits. Wagtails include a number of different races of Yellow, whilst White and Citrine are also regular. Flocks of larks should include Short-toed and Black-crowned Finch, whilst this area is one of the few places in Oman where Oriental Skylark is regularly observed. Raptors also feature here, with Marsh, Montagu’s and perhaps Pallid Harrier, Short-toed, Greater-spotted and Eastern Imperial and possibly Peregrine Falcon. The irrigation machinery provides a perch for the colourful Indian Roller.

Day 14: We spend the day visiting sites in the Sohar area searching for any species we may have missed. In the evening we head back to Muscat where we connect with a late evening flight back to the UK. Arrival is the following morning.

**Prices**

Ground Price: £2,695
Single Room: £270
Deposit: £250
*Air Fare: £450

This tour is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation, meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature, air passenger duty taxes and fuel surcharges. Visa to enter Oman.

Accommodation is generally good in Oman with en-suite facilities although the rest house at Qatbit is basic. A wide variety of cuisine is available from Arabic to Indian and international dishes. Transport by minibus throughout. Short walks in the desert and along tracks and wadis.

*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*