

# Musandam, Oman

Musandam (Arabic: E3F/E)

The Musandam Peninsula is a rugged and starkly beautiful region with its main attraction being the "Fjords of Arabia". Musandam overlooks the Straits of Hormuz, one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. The name Musandam actually refers to just one island in the extreme north of the peninsula; however the name has now become generally accepted for the whole area. Musandam peninsula, Khawr Najd

The natural beauty of this region is breathtaking with the cliffs of the Hajar Mountains falling steeply into the Arabian Sea from a height of almost 2,000 metres. The fjord-like landscape is not unlike that of Norway and is known to the Omanis as ruus al-jebel.

Segregated from the rest of Oman by the east coast of the UAE, Musandam is accessible by internal flights operated by Oman Air, by road and the fast new diesel-powered passenger ferry.

Khasab is the principal town in the region. Boat trips are available from this small fishing port - which has retained its old way of living - to visit Khawr Ash Shamm's placid waters, idyllic beaches and isolated outposts. Other boat trips go to Telegraph Island for dolphin spotting or the cliff side village of Kumzar.

The Khasab Fort is a picturesque stronghold situated on the inner cove of Khasab Bay in Wilayat Khasab - Musandam. The fort was built in the 17th century by Portuguese seeking dominion over regional maritime trade. Other places of interest include the Bukha Fort, which was built by the Portuguese in the 16th century and the pre-historic rock drawings of Tawi.

## Virgin Diving

Striking as Musandam is, it is even more beautiful and packed with attractions underwater. Very few areas in the world can still claim to provide "virgin diving" and the Musandam Peninsula is one of them.

Some of the best dive sites in the area include Lima Rock, Oakley Island, Umm Al Farrayan, PC Rock, Red Island and Ghubbat As Shabbus. Night dives are the latest must-do experience in Oman and are widely available at shallow wrecks such as Bandar Jussa.

The amazing diversity of marine life includes exotic reef fish to schooling barracuda, turtles, sunfish, reef sharks and even whale sharks. All divers should be qualified to at least PADI Advanced Open Water status. Novices and snorkellers can participate in underwater discovery in the area's many khawrs or bays.

Musandam is also considered a dolphins' playground with many sightings in the area. The temperate waters of the Straits of Hormuz are abundant with sharks including the hammerhead, reef, nurse and stunning large whale sharks.

## Fjord Canoeing

As many of Musandam's fjords are sheltered, they provide ideal canoeing conditions. Visitors can explore small isolated fishing villages and small inlets from the sea.

Musandam peninsula - tourist dhow

## Dhow Cruises

Cruising through the fjords or off Oman's rugged coast on a dhow is an idyllic eco-friendly way to travel in Oman and is a great way to explore the breathtaking landscape. Full day, overnight and weekend cruises are available