

Nytårsrejsen til Dubai og Cruise med Costa Fortuna 2013



Vi havde glædet os meget til vores Nytårsrejse, som startede fra Kastrup d. 27. december. Mødetiden var kl. 5, og mange havde ikke sovet ret meget den nat. Nogle havde boet på hotel nær Kastrup lufthavn. Der var 36 deltagere, og de kom fra Sjælland, Fyn, Jylland, og 6 kom fra Sverige – nogle stødte til i Wien. Vi fløj med **Austrian Airlines**, og flyene var meget fyldt op. Alle fik i lufthavnen en **konvolut med informationsmateriale** om UAE og Oman.

Vi ankom kl. 21.30 til **Dubai Airport**, som er verdens 6. største lufthavn – der var også store afstande og mange mennesker. Vi kom igennem paskontrollen og fik vores bagage og kom med transferbus til cruiseterminalen. Robert fra Tyskland var vores kontaktperson i bussen, og han var meget livlig. Indcheckningen på Costa Fortuna gik smidigt. Alle var meget trætte, men nogle havde haft problemer med at sove pga. skibets lyde – vi havde medbragt ekstra sovepiller og ørepropper. Skibet lå i havnen natten over.

Næste morgen måtte vi alle deltage i den obligatoriske **redningsøvelse** – vi stod i rækker ved vores "muster station" iført vore redningsveste. Personalet instruerede. I kahytten fandt vi også et papir om, at skibet sejlede i nærheden af områder kendt for piratvirksomhed, men at man havde taget forholdsregler mod dette – beroligende! Men vi fik morgenmad, og skibet afgang kl. 10,30.

Vi holdt et **velkomstinformationsmøde** kl. 16 – 17 i Lounge Comte Verde. Mycruise bød på et glas champagne. Vi snakkede om programmet for de kommende dage, drinksækker, skibets udflugtsprogram og andre praktiske forhold. Vi underholdt os også med en quiz, der skulle give lidt informationer om Oman. Vi forsøgte at lære skibet at kende, men det er ganske svært pga. størrelsen – det er 272 meter langt, 36 meter bredt med 14 etager. Det er bygget i 2003. På denne nytårsrejse var der over 2900 gæster fra mange nationaliteter og over 1000 besætningsmedlemmer.





Udsigt over Old Muscat



Sultanens Palads i Old Muscat

Vi spiste ved 1. seatning i **Restaurant Michelangelo** ved 4 runde borde. Der var flotte menukort, hvor man kunne vælge mellem forskellige forretter, supper, pastaretter, salater, hovedretter og desserter. Efter middagen var der show i teatret forudgået af **kaptajnens velkomst-cocktailparty**, hvor nogle af officererne blev præsenteret og kaptajn Massimo Garbarino bød velkommen på 5-6 sprog.

Efter en ny nats søvn lagde vi om morgenen til i **Muscat**, hvor 2/3 af gruppen var booket ind på en halvdagstur med bus. Vi måtte først med en obligatorisk gratis shuttlebus gennem havneområdet, og fandt efter lidt søgning vores bus og lokalguiden **Salim, der var tidligere faldskærmssoldat**. Hans hustru arbejdede i Emirates Airlines, og flere af hans børn studerede i udlandet – en datter læste til læge i Florida. Han gav os en fin beskrivelse af den utrolige modernisering, som Oman har gennemgået de seneste 40 år takket være oliepenge og en fremsynet sultan.

Trafikken var tæt, og afstandene var ikke ubetydelige. Vi skulle først se **Grand Mosque**, hvor nogle af damerne i gruppen måtte af med 5 euro for at blive "tækkelig klædt". Der var mange turister. Vi så en fin arabisk have med blomster og vandanlæg og efter at have stillet vore sko udenfor, kunne vi passere gennem selve moskeen med 21 døre af udskåret træ fra Myanmar, stort gulvtæppe vævet af iranske damer, marmor fra Italien og 7 tons lysekroner fra Østrig. Der var en mindre moske for kvinder, som kunne følge Imamens fredagstale på 2 Tv-skærme – her var gulvtæppet fra Skotland.

Udflugten fortsatte til Old Muscat, hvor vi så museet **Bayt Al Zubair**, der er indrettet i et fint arabisk hus. Her var en flot præsentation af omanernes levevis – klædedragter, våben, smykker, etc. Der var "photo-stop" ved udsigten over Old Muscat og ved **Præsidentpaladset**, inden vi kørte tilbage mod Costa Fortuna langs havnepromenaden Corniche. I havnen lå sultanens store lystyacht. Oman virkede naturmæssigt at være præget meget af grålige sten og bjerge.



Le Corniche i Muscat



Sultanens yacht "Al Said" med plads til hans symfoniorkester



Om eftermiddagen samledes en mindre gruppe for at **spadsere langs Corniche til Muscat Souq** – en gammel overdækket basar med mange små forretninger – her kunne købes arabisk tøj, smykker, turistsouvenirer, røgelse og myrra. Vi kunne også få dejlig frisk frugtjuice og kaffe på en fortovsrestaurant. Man kunne betale med real, dirham, euro, dollar og visa.

Aftenens middag var god, vi flyttede os lidt rundt mellem bordene for at have mulighed for at snakke med nye mennesker. Efter middagen kunne vi gå til **circusforestilling i teatret** eller slappe af med kaffe eller drinks i en af de mange barer – pianobaren Lounge Comte Rouge var populær.

Costa Fortuna skulle først afsejle fra Muscat kl. 14 d. 30. december, så der var mulighed for at gå i land om formiddagen. Nogle valgte at blive på skibet, **nyde solen på soldækkets liggestole ved poolen**, besøge spacerter eller fitnessrummet eller slappe af med andre aktiviteter. Vi får hver dag Costa's nyhedsblad "Today", hvor vi må vælge mellem alle dagens tilbud. I aften er der **"Italian Night"** på skibet, og det plejer at være festligt.

Sultanens store yacht "Al Said" sejlede ind i havnen, mens vi lå på soldækket. Den var ledsaget af 2 politimotorbåde. Sultanen er enevældig monark, og det store billede af ham med nytårsfyrværkeri så vi på facaden af det museum, som vi besøgte i Muscat.

Der var mange mennesker på soldækket, men alle kan altid finde en ledig liggestol. Costa Fortuna's dekoration skal forestille at være maritim og historisk. I cafeteriet "Christoforo Colombo" er der historiske kort på bordene og væggene. Der er flere forskellige **valgmuligheder mht. til måltider**. I cafeteriet kan vi spise udendørs og komme i badetøj, og man kan få pizza, Caesar Salad og dejlig frugtsalat foruden en masse andet.

En del har "all inklusive drink package", og det betaler sig, hvis man drikker vin til måltiderne og 1-2 drinks før/eller

efter. Og så får man mulighed for at prøve eksotiske drinks som White Russian, Pink Lady, Between the Sheets, Camel Milk og diverse former for kaffe.

Vi holdt **informationsmøde nr. 2** om eftermiddagen i Comte Verde Lounge, og vi startede med at fejre en af deltagerne – Dorte – med fødselsdagssang – hun havde **rund fødselsdag**. Så snakkede vi om Costa Club, safran, udflugter i Abu Dhabi og Dubai, gættede quiz om UAE og lærte hinanden mere at kende. Nogle fandt ud af at følges på udflugter og dele taxi'er. Jens Peter på 14 år og Dorte vandt priser i quiz-konkurrencerne, som findes længere fremme i denne rejseberetning – i øvrigt sammen med noget baggrundsmateriale, hvor man kan finde mange af svarene på de svære spørgsmål.



Middagen var festlig med italiensk charme og højt humør. Dagens tema var "Italian Night", og mange mødte klædt i rødt, hvidt eller grønt. Tjenerne sang for på populære italienske melodier som "O Solo Mio", "Funiculi, funicula", "That's amore", "Volare", og der var conga lines, og tjenerne bød op til dans og optrådte på balkonen. Gæsterne svingede traditionsmæssigt med de hvide servietter. Tjenerne kom også med en flot kage til dagens fødselar, og de sang "Happy Birthday". Alvar og Britt var inviteret til specielt cocktailparty med kaptajnen sammen med 3 andre par, som også fejrede guldbryllup.



Vi fotograferede Dorte med fødselsdagskagen og Alvar & Britt efter mødet med kaptajnen. Vi lærer vore rejsekammerater mere og mere at kende, og snakken går bl.a. om rejser – mange er meget berejste. Nogle rejser nærmest uafbrudt - Asien, Amerika, Australien, Antarktis, Afrika, Andalusien. Vi hørte om nogle, der snart skulle 2 måneder gennem Mellemmamerika fra Mexico til Panama, andre havde købt cruise fra Sidney til Hawaii, og nogle skulle på safari i Kenya.

Aftenens show i Rex Theatre var meget vellykket og tempofyldt med kendte numre – Elvis, Frank Sinatra, Liza Minelli, Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, Tom Jones, Diana Ross & The Supremes, Pink Floyd, Police, Sting, Kylie Minoque og mange andre. Scenelyset var flot med fine laser-effekter. Efter teatret var der god stemning i skibets mange barer med levende musik og underholdning. På dækket udenfor var der varmt, og brandslangerne lå rullet ud – er det mon til brug ved evt. uindbudte gæster?

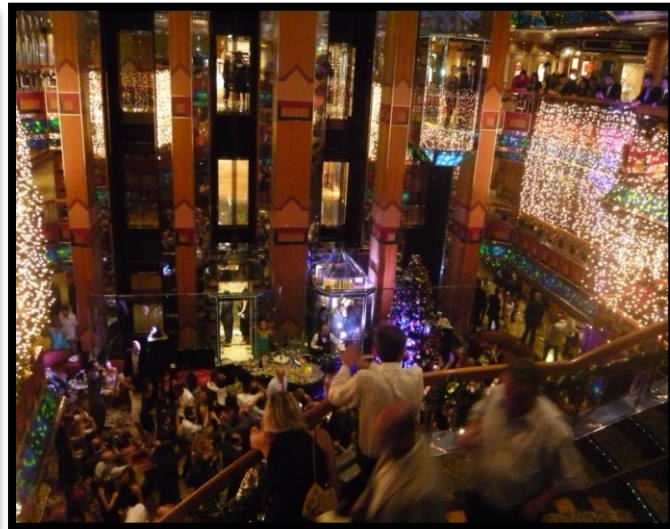
Skibsavisen "Today" fortæller, at vi Nytårsaften er i den lille by Khasab fra kl. 8 til kl. 18. Nogle tager på sejltur med dhow i de flotte fjorde i "Arabiens Norge" – andre nyder solen på skibet. Der loves roligt klart



vejr med blå himmel og 25°. Der annonceres med fælles morgenmotionsvandring på dækkets jogging track, bogudlån i skibsbiblioteket, quiz, og man kan deltage i basketball, tennis, gymnastik og danseundervisning ved poolen og lære om "Secrets of a flatter stomach" i spa-centret. Karin og jeg var med shuttlebus en kort tur ind til centrum i Khasab for at checke e-mails i en internetcafé. Udenfor Costa Fortuna var der på kajen rejst en lille bygning, hvor der blev vist indretning af et traditionelt omanisk telthus – sortklædte omanikvinder bød på kaffe og søde dadler, og man skulle sidde på gulvet, hvilket var umuligt for os. Fra vort skib havde vi udsigt over den oaselignende by blandt grå stenbjerger – man kommer til at associere til forposter for Fremmedlegionen. I havneområdet var der også en livlig trafik med speedbåde, der fragter varer og geder mellem Khasab og Iran.

Nogle vælger at spise frokost og/eller morgenmad i Restaurant Michelangelo, hvor der serveres ved bordene – andre vælger den mere uformelle selvbetjeningsrestaurant Cristoforo Colombo. Skibets Cruise Director Francesco lover os et musikalsk **Radio Show i teateret** Nytårsaften (2 forestillinger), og **Party, Party, Party i alle baren** på dæk 5. Der er også indbudt til Nytårsbingo, hvor man kan vinde minimum 1000 euro, og skibspræsten holder messe i skibets kapel kl. 20.15. I kahytten har vi Tv, og på BBC hørte vi, at Formel 1-stjernen Michael Schumacher nu er hjerneskadet efter en skiulykke i Meribel, og han er indlagt på hospitalet i Grenoble.

Nytårsaften startede med en fin 5-6 retters middag – flot menukort, fin mad med foie gras og hummer, og Costa bød på vin og champagne. Vi havde svensk flag på bordet i anledning af Britt og Alvars guldbryllup, og de fik en "guldbarre" med østrigsk "guldstøvschampagne". Vi byttede lidt rundt på pladserne ved vore 4 borde, så vi kunne snakke med nye mennesker. Der var mobildækning, så mange fik ringet til venner og familie hjemme, og ønsket Godt Nytår. Vi fik også omdelt teksterne til "Vær Velkommen Herrens År" og "Auld Long Syne", men der blev ikke lejlighed til fællessang.



Der var mange, som var meget elegant klædt, men morsom nytårsudklædning var ikke meget brugt. I vores gruppe havde Helle følehorn, Dorte havde kaninører, og Christina havde en rød Liza Minelli-fjer. Karin gjorde stor lykke med sin lyserøde glorie – både professionelle og private fotografer jagtede hende. En hollandsk animator var specielt "tændt" og ville danse med hende. Der var fuld gang i musikken i alle barerne på 5. sal, stemningen var høj, og den steg til kogepunktet lige efter midnat. Tjenerne kom med champagne og petit fours, og der blev serveret en speciel italiensk nytårspølseret. Der var fuld knald på dansegulvene. Der var også udstilling af udskåret frugt, marcipanfigurer og store iskulpturer. Kaptajnen dukkede op i Lounge Comte Rouge, hvor de fleste i vor gruppe sad. Champagnepropperne sprang. Alt i alt var det en meget vellykket nytårsaften, hvor vi alle fik ønsket hinanden et rigtigt Godt Nytår! Natten fortsatte med dans og fest, luften var lun, og fra dæk 11 kunne vi se lysene langs kysten til UAE. Men de fleste af vore billeder fra den festlige Nytårsaften blev desværre mislykkede og uanvendelige.



1. januar var vi nogenlunde tidligt oppe, men mange sov nok længe. Vi ankom til Abu Dhabi kl. 9 og lå i havn til kl. 23. Vejret var flot. Den mest kendte seværdighed i Abu Dhabi er **Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Grand Mosque** med 82 hvide marmorkupler og 9 tons tunge krystallysekroner – mange tog en taxi dertil. Andre kørte til **Saadiyat Island** for at se, hvor man er i gang med at opføre en masse kulturelle institutioner – Louvre, Guggenheim, New York University, National Museum, Maritime Museum, Arts & Performance Center, etc. I **Manarat al Saadiyat** er der et udstillingscenter for disse byggerier, og der er også udstilling af moderne kunst f. eks. en rød Porche Fat Boy og et tårn af stole. Tæt ved ligger UAE Pavilion, som var UAE's bidrag til Shanghai EXPO 2010 – den er tegnet af Norman Foster + Partners.



Emirates Palace er en anden seværdighed i Abu Dhabi, men der kræves ofte reservation i forvejen for at få adgang til en af de 20 restauranter – og påklædningen skal være "smart casual". Vi var 4, som havde reserveret til frokost, så vi kunne passere sikkerhedsvagterne, mens andre blev afvist. Hotelaulaen var storslået med marmor, luksus og bladguld



i loftet. Vi spiste frokost i "Le Café" i forhallen – 4 camel burgers 24 carat gold with pommes fristes + Pelegrino mineralvand kostede 600 dirham. Guldautomaten blev også testet, og et 24 karat guldhjerte kom ud, efter at kreditkortet kom ind.

Man kunne også nær cruisehavnen besøge et stort marked, hvor der bl.a. blev solgt meget lækre dadler – friske og konserverede. Men taxichaufførerne var slemme til at snyde – de ville ikke køre efter taximeter, men kun efter 3 timers tariffer. Vi oplevede en taxichauffør fra Punjab, som havde været 2 år i Abu Dhabi. Han havde kone og 4 døtre hjemme i Punjab, og kunne kun besøge dem 1 gang årligt. En datter på 3 år havde fået en alvorlig brændskade af den ene arm, og led nu af

alvorlig kontraktur og behandlingskomplikationer – også en menneskeskæbne! Vi kom også forbi området, hvor præsidentfamilien har pragtvillaer og et sted, hvor der opførtes et White Palace, som også tilhører præsidenten.

Nogle brugte tiden i Abu Dhabi på et besøg i Ferrari World og/eller Yas Waterworld, nogle kørte rundt med Hop-On-Hop-Off-bussen, og nogle var med på udflugter arrangeret af Costa, og resten tog en taxi til den store moske. Om eftermiddagen holdt vi vores 3. informationsmøde, hvor vi informerede om programmet for de kommende dage; der var igen quiz, vi fik dadler, Jens Peter tryllede for os, og Palle fik en præmie for sit gode sociale bidrag til gruppen og sin energi på dansegulvet. Vi opdagede, at man kunne få nogle skønne ice-expresso i en bar på dækket.

Om aftenen var der igen linet op til fest – aftenens påklædning skulle være "galla", og der var indbudt til Farewell Dinner med fin menu. Ved desserten blev vi overrasket med musik, kage med fyrværkeri og champagne. Der var præsentation af de forskellige personalegrupper og kaptajnen, og det hele var meget festligt.

Martin og Karin fik igen indbydelse til cocktailparty med kaptajnen – det var for dem 3. gang på dette cruise, og denne gang i regi af medlemskab i Costa Club. Derefter var der show i teatret med talentfulde besætningsmedlemmer – mest bifald fik ham, der sang "My Way". Festen sluttede med at hele salen stod op, klappede og sang med på "YMCA". Skibets fotografer udstillede masser af billeder fra nytårsaften.

Britt & Alvar fik en flot chokoladelagkage sendt til deres kahyt – den var oprindeligt bestilt til middagen nytårsaften til levering ved bordet med sang af tjenerne – "Happy Anniversary", men det lykkedes ikke, så i stedet skulle den leveres til kahytten. Britt & Alvar sendte kagen tilbage, fordi de troede, at den var til en anden familie, for der var kun ét lys på den, og der stod "Happy Birthday".

En af deltagerne i rejsegruppen har opholdt sig 6 uger i Indien for på frivillig basis at undervise skolepiger bl.a. i computer. Det var et IDEX-program, og sjovt nok er Martin og Karin godt kendt med lederen af IDEX – Ninad Sharma,



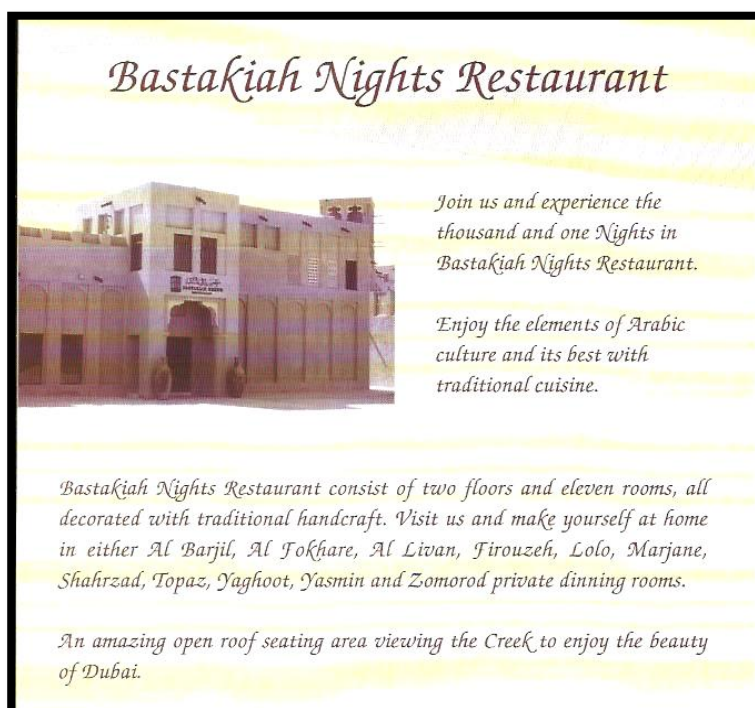
og de har været hjemme og besøge ham privat i Jaipur. I dagens løb var Martin i telefonkontakt med Poul Hoiness, der er Danmarks ambassadør i UAE. De er gamle skolekammerater, men har ikke haft kontakt siden gymnasietiden. Desværre var der ikke tid til at kigge forbi til en drink eller en kop kaffe i ambassadørboligen. Poul fortalte, at der nytårsaften havde været et enormt stort og flot fyrværkeri over Dubai, måske verdens største med 400.000 raketter? – det må vi senere se på www.youtube.com

Torsdag d. 2. januar var vi i Dubai – deltagerne i gruppen spredtes i alle retninger. Mange var rundt med Hop-On-Hop-Off-bussen, andre kom rundt med Metro eller taxi. Palm Island med Atlantis Hotel havde imponeret. Nogle havde været på shopping i Mall of the Emirates med skibakken. Martin & Karin kørte til [Dubai Mall](#) med taxi, gik rundt i flere timer og så [Burj Khalifa](#), det store akvarium, skøjtebanen og det [dansende springvand](#). Vi så shoppingvogne til småbørn – de lignede biler og var udstyret med indbygget iPad. Udenfor centret så vi en lang række af flotte biler – 3 Lamborghini, 1 Ferrari og en megastor hvid Rolls Royce. Vi kørte med 2 taxichauffører fra Peshawar i Pakistan, og de fortalte, at de arbejder i 12 timers skift 7 dage om ugen i Dubai, og de kommer kun hjem til familien efter mange måneders arbejde. Dubai Sky Line er meget imponerende.

Vi mødtes igen om aftenen til [middagen i Restaurant Michelangelo](#), og vi har efterhånden lært hinanden lidt at kende, så snakken går lystigt. Efter middagen var der ["Karaoke Night"](#) i Leonardo da Vinci Lounge – Martin sang "My Way", og Hans sang "Love Me Tender", inden de lukkede ned for denne aktivitet. Senere gik vi og [dansede lidt](#) til dejlige evergreens i Grand Bar Comte de Savoia, hvor Duo Manhattan spillede. Nogle gik til ["Classical Concert"](#) i Rex Theatre kl. 22.45. En af rejsedeltagerne havde heldet med sig i skibets casino. En majoritet af Costa's ansatte er fra Filippinerne, men på denne rejse har vi også snakket med ansatte fra Kina, Vietnam, Holland, Indien og flere andre lande – vores kahytssteward Eduardo var fra Peru. Kufferten skulle pakkes og stilles udenfor kahytsdøren inden kl. 01.

Vores sidste dag på Costa Fortuna gik med at nyde morgenmad og frokost, slappe af i solen, og få alt klart til kl. 14, hvor vi i bus kørte til Hotel Avenue i Deira. Robert Schwartz var med som lokalguide. Han var en meget festlig berliner, der bl.a. fortalte, at 3 ting må man kigge langt efter i Dubai: fattige/tiggere, tyveknægte og narkotika. Og sheiker går ens klædt, men kendes på bilmærket, armbåndsuret, cifrene på nummerpladen og nummeret på mobiltelefonen. Vi kom på en udflugt til [bydelen Bastakiah](#), som er den ældste del af Dubai. Vi spadserede en tur hen til [Dubai Museum](#), der lå i en fortlignende bygning. Det var et fint museum.

Derefter gik vi til [tekstil-souq'en](#) og [sejlede med abra](#) over Dubai Creek til [krydderi-souq'en](#), hvor kamelchokolade var et indkøbshit. I [guld-souq'en](#) er der over 200 guldbutikker med et imponerende udvalg af guldsmykker - flere damer kom hjem med en ny flot ring eller en halskæde. I et udstillingsvindue så vi en enorm guldring med en "diamant" – vi fotograferede den. Vi var fremme ved Hotel Avenue på Al Riqqa Street kl. 18 og fik vore værelser. Hotellet var et pænt 4* hotel med pæne værelser og swimmingpool på taget. Nogle havde bestilt bord på thailandsk restaurant "Mango Tree" ved Dubai Mall ved det dansende springvand, andre valgte restauranter nær hotellet, og nogle spiste filippinsk buffet på 1. sal i hotellet – her var der en Wild West Saloon Bar, som om aftenen forvandlede til natklub med en kødrand af unge damer. Vi kunne også kl. 21 se et flot fyrværkeri inde over byen – mon ikke det var markering af starten på Dubai Shopping Festival?



Bastakiah Nights Restaurant

Join us and experience the thousand and one Nights in Bastakiah Nights Restaurant.

Enjoy the elements of Arabic culture and its best with traditional cuisine.

Bastakiah Nights Restaurant consist of two floors and eleven rooms, all decorated with traditional handcraft. Visit us and make yourself at home in either Al Barjil, Al Jokhare, Al Livan, Firouzeh, Lolo, Marjane, Shahrzad, Topaz, Yaghoot, Yasmin and Zomorod private dinning rooms.

An amazing open roof seating area viewing the Creek to enjoy the beauty of Dubai.

Appetizer

Soup

*Soup of the Day ***

*Hommos ***

Pureed chick peas blended with garlic, lemon juice, tahina and olive oil

*Moutable ***

A Traditional grilled Egg Plant, with Tahina, Yoghurt, Garlic and lemon

*Tabouleh ***

Salad with tomatoe, parsley, mint, and crushed wheat with lemon and olive oil

Sumbuseh

Choice of meat or cheese wrapped in a homemade pastry and deep-fried to perfection

*Labneh ***

Homemade yoghurt sprinkled with olive oil (can also be served with fresh mint and parsley)

*Waragh Anab ***

Grape leaves stuffed with seasoned rice

Fried Kebaa

Wheat, meat, onion and special nuts

Main Course

1-Bastakiah Mixed Grilled Kebabs

Kebab Masti (Mixed w/ Yoghurt)

Lamb tenderloin marinated in yoghurt and black pepper

Kebab Koubideh

Barbequed Ground lamb

Kebab Joojeh (Baby Chicken)

Barbequed chicken with olive oil, lemon juice and saffron

2-Bastakiah Kebabs in Homemade sauce and Fried Eggplant

Fried eggplant with Homemade vegetable sauce and Lamb tenderloin marinated in yoghurt

*Can be served with out Lamb for vegetarian ***

3-Khforesh-e Bamieh

Traditional stew with Beef, okra, tomatoe and onions

*Side Dish Rice ***

A combination of

Oriental Polo

Rice with special nuts

White Rice

Topped with saffron

Dessert

Selection of freshly cut fruits

Cream Caramel

Bastakiah Sweets Plate

All dishes will be served with traditional sesame bread with cheese and nuts

*** Chef Suggestions for vegetarian ~*

Den sidste dag i Dubai havde vi også til rådighed til sightseeing – vi skulle forlade værelserne kl. 16. Der var morgenmad i Manhattan Restaurant, og derefter var det en dag på egen hånd. Nogle tog med metro'en til Mall of the Emirates eller Dubai Mall. Nogle hvilede nogle timer ved swimmingpoolen på 7. sal i hotellet. Nær hotellet fandtes Al Gurhka Shopping Mall, hvor man i "Seattle's Best" fik udmærket kaffe.

Om aftenen arrangerede vi fælles afskedsmiddag i arabisk stil på Restaurant Bastakiah Nights. Det foregik i en fin over 100 år gammel familieejet bygning, og vi fik serveret et udvalg af arabiske appetizers, hovedretter med forskellige former for kebabs og desserter. 20 deltog i middagen, som var helt alkoholfri. Den grønne velkomstdrink var lime og mynte, og der var stemningsfuld arabisk musik i gårdhaven.

Vi kom derhen med taxi, som kun kostede 20 dirham svarende til 30 kr. Vi havde også mulighed for at gå en lille tur langs Dubai Creek, se de illuminerede dinnercruisebåde på floden, og besøge en levende udstilling af beduiner fra mange af Afrikas lande. Vi kom tilbage til hotellet på gåben, med taxi eller med metro. Gitte forstuede sin ankel, men vi havde heldigvis medbragt et elastisk støttebind, og der blev ordnet rullestol i lufthavnen.

Robert hentede os kl. 22.30, og han måtte suse tilbage fra lufthavnen til hotellet, for en havde glemt sin iPod. Inden flyafgangen kunne vi drikke en kop kaffe i "Costa Coffee". Vi var med Austrian Airs natfly til Wien, og derfra kom vi videre til København/Stockholm. Vi blev udsat for en ordentlig rystetur over Kuwait og Iraq. Vi fløj med

Boeing 767 fra Dubai til Wien og med Airbus 320 til København, og flyene var nærmest overbookede. Da vi landede i København fik vi en lille "nytårskoncert" – i flyets højttalere blev spillet wienermusik. Nogle af rejsedeltagerne havde forlænget opholdet nogle dage, og havde mulighed for at deltage i jeep-udflugt i ørkenen med besøg hos beduinfamilie og afternoon-tea på det berømte sejlformede 7*-hotel Burj Al Arab.

Vort sammenfattende indtryk af Costa Fortuna's Nytårscruise er, vi har aldrig fået så god mad på et Costa-cruise tidligere, og vi syntes, at stemningen ombord var god. Underholdningen var OK, og musikken var varieret. Publikum i vor aldersklasse fandt sig godt tilrette på skibet. Nytårsaften var festlig på italiensk vis. Deltagerne har været glade, så vidt vi har hørt. Alle har været raske, omend vi rygtesvis hørte om, at nogle havde haft lidt mavebesvær. Men mange havde nok godt af at komme hjem og giver leveren og fordøjelsessystemet en hvilepause efter en uges all-inclusive på Costa Fortuna. En stor tak til alle rejsedeltagerne for aktiv og positiv deltagelse i aktiviteterne på rejsen.



Aulaen i Emirates Palace



En 24 Carat Gold Camel Burger fra "Le Café" i Emirates Palace – ligner alle andre burgere.



Fra dadel-markedet i Abu Dhabi



Farewell Dinner med festlig dessert



Høj stemning ved middagsbordet



Fra besætningens talentshow

Nogle fotos fra Burj Khalifa og Dubai Mall





I Dubai Mall så vi børneshoppingvogne med iPad, slikkepindetræ, indkøbslotteri med Lamborghini som gevinst i indkøbslotteri, Abaya-klædte kvinder på indkøb, et dansende springvand o.m.a. Krydderierne er fra Spice Souq.



Dubai Museum informerede meget fint om udviklingen i Dubai fra forhistorisk tid og frem til vore dage



En megastor "guldsag" fotograferet i Dubai Gold Soug – den var forsynet med certifikat fra Guinness Book of Records



Bastakiah Nights Restaurant



Fra beduinudstilling ved Dubai Creek



Forret ved afskedsmiddagen





New Year's Eve Gala Dinner

Ravioli di mango con gamberi

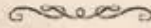
Shrimp salad served with snow peas tossed with lemon oil and mango ravioli #

Foie gras

Foie gras #

Melanzane al pomodoro e basilico

Eggplant with tomato, basil and Parmesan cheese mousse (V)

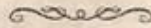


Pasta e fagioli

Pasta and beans soup #

Crema di broccoli

Creamy broccoli soup with garlic croutons (V)

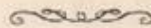


Risotto con champagne, pepe nero e cappesante

Risotto with champagne, black pepper and seared sea scallops #

Tortelloni ripieni al cinghiale, mascarpone e parmigiano

Tortelloni filled with wild boar, mascarpone and Parmigiano cheese #



Aragosta alla griglia

Grilled lobster with cuttlefish ink rice, cherry tomatoes with butter sauce #

Filetto di branzino in padella

Pan fried sea bass with toasted hazelnuts and garlic chips #

Anatra croccante

Crispy duck served with berni potatoes, braised red cabbage and asparagus #

Medaglione di filetto di vitello

Grilled veal fillet with broccoli and potato dutchess #

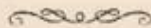
Tatin agli asparagi

Green asparagus Tatin, poached egg and soy milk sauce (V) *



Insalata mista

Mixed salad served with sliced tomatoes, red onion, red radish



Selezione di formaggi italiani ed internazionali

Selection of Italian and international cheese:

Brie, Provolone, Gorgonzola

served with walnut bread, orange marmalade and raisins

(V) Lacto-Ovo Vegetarian Diet

Dishes marked with a hash mark contain products that are originally frozen and then defrosted observing the strictest procedures that do not change the properties of its taste in any way. In case of any elementary intolerance, we kindly ask you to contact our personnel

* Public Health Advisory: Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk for foodborne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions

Gala Menu

EVENING ACTIVITIES

Good Evening

DRESS CODE: GALA

Rex Theatre, decks 3, 4 & 5

19.45
Show for 2nd
sitting dinner Guests

21.30
Show for 1st
sitting dinner Guests



**Musical show with singers
Franco Casilli and Alexandra Hans
and the Costa Fortuna Dancers**

For the safety of the performers and to guarantee the quality of the special effects,
it is not permitted to use flash photography and video cameras with auxiliary lighting.
Please switch off your mobile phones before the show starts. Thank you.

23.00-Central Hall, deck 3 Buenos Aires

San Silvestro Night

music with DJ Alain

23.00-Conte Rosso,
deck 5 Genoa

**WELCOME TO
2014**

with Vince and Danilo

23.00-Grand Bar Conte di Savoia
deck 5 Genoa

TWIST & SHOUT

with the Trio Kiss Kiss and
the Duo Manhattan

23.00 - Conte Verde,
deck 5 Genoa

**"La noche de las
Uvas de la Suerte"**
with Los Paraguayos and
and Duo Sound Live

23.30 - Leonardo Da Vinci Lounge, deck 5 Genoa

PARTY SENSATIONS

WITH THE BROKEN BAND

00.30 - Vulcania Disco, deck 4 Santos

NUMBER ONE PARTY

with DJ Enri

MUSIC IN THE EVENING

Costa Atrium Lounge, deck 3 Buenos Aires

Music with
Los Paraguayos

	18.00-18.30	
	20.30-21.00	
Danilo		Duo Sound Live
18.30-19.00		19.00-19.30
19.30-20.30		21.00-22.30
22.30-23.00		

Grand Bar Conte di Savoia deck 5 Genoa

Music with

Duo Manhattan	Trio Kiss Kiss
18.00-19.00	19.00-20.00
20.00-21.00	21.00-22.00
22.00-23.00	23.00-24.30
24.30-02.00	02.00-03.00

Leonardo da Vinci Lounge, deck 5 Genoa

Music and Dance with the

Broken Band
22.00-23.00
23.30-03.00

Conte Verde Lounge, deck 5 Genoa

Music with

Los Paraguayos	Duo Sound Live
21.30-23.15	23.15-00.30
24.30-01.30	01.30-03.00

Conte Rosso Lounge, deck 5 Genoa

International rhythms with

Vince	Danilo
20.15-21.30	24.30-02.30
21.45-22.30	
23.00-00.30	
02.30-03.00	

Club Conte Grande, deck 11 Cannes

Piano Bar with Franz

19.00-20.00
20.15-21.15
21.30-22.30

MINI & MAXI CLUB (3-11 YEARS)

For the activities of the MINI Club (3-6 years) and the MAXI Club (7-11 years) please read our "Funzone" children's program, available at the SQUOR CLUB, deck 12 Funchal.

20.15 - BABY DANCE SQUOR
Disco Vulcania, deck 4 Santos

TEENZONE (12-17 YEARS)

17.00 - EXTREME DODGEBALL

Sports Court, deck 12

23.15 - Guys vs Girls

Vulcania Disco, deck 4

24.00 - New Year's Party

Vulcania Disco, deck 4

The above program may vary according to the number of the participants or the weather conditions.

DUTY FREE SHOPS

18.30-24.00 deck 5 Genoa

For your gala night
Swarovski Jewellery with 20% discount
Desire Rings with 50% discount
Gala bags only €10

CASINO NEPTUNIA

Sets 18.30 - 24.00 deck 5 Genoa

SIGN UP TO ELECTRONIC TEXAS HOLD 'EM

11.00pm meeting for the card players

TEXAS HOLD'EM POKER

CASINO POLO SHIRT AT ONLY €25,

AUTHENTIC CASINO CARDS ON SALE...

We remind all guests to please proceed to the cash deck of the casino to collect your winnings. Please bring your costa card during opening hours.

Nytårsrejse 2013

Det bliver 10. gang, vi vil samle en gruppe glade mennesker til en Nytårsrejse.

Vi vil på et **cruise med Costa Fortuna**

fra **Dubai gennem Hormuz-strædet til Oman.**



Afrejsen bliver mellem jul og nytår – 1 uges cruise + 1 ekstra dag i Dubai.

Vi tror, at man skal være tidligt ude med bestillingen.

Kontakt os på E-mail: martin@smedebol.dk, hvis du er interesseret.

Eller kontakt: Mycruise (Gabrielle Blomroos), Tirsbækvej 5, 1. sal, DK-2720 Vanløse

E-mail: gb@mycruise.dk www.mycruise.dk Tlf: +45 7022 5959

Krydstogt fra Dubai - december 2013

Rejseplan:

Fredag d. 27. december:

Vi forlader sne og kulde og rejser til sol og varme. Vi flyver med Austrian Airways fra København til Wien kl. 07.10-09.00. Der fortsættes kl. 13.05-21.50 fra Wien til Dubai. Transfer fra lufthavn til havn og Check-in på Costa Fortuna.

Lørdag d. 28. december:

Afsejling fra Dubai kl. 08.00. Vi har god tid til at lære et moderne cruiseskib at kende, og der er mange tilbud: 4 swimmingpools, 6 jacuzzi, fitnesscenter, mange barer, soldæk, kasino, kapel, stort teater med daglig underholdning, dans til levende musik, medicinsk center, shopping center, etc. Og dejlige måltider med høflig betjening i elegante restauranter. Costa Fortuna er bygget i 2003, og har kapacitet til ca. 3500 passagerer og 1000 besætnings-medlemmer.

Sejlruten går gennem Hormuz strædet, hvorigennem en masse af verdens store olietankere sejler, og der er indimellem politiske konflikter med den amerikanske og iranske flåde som hovedaktører.

Søndag d. 29. december:

Ankomst til Muscat kl. 08.30 - vi kan spise morgenmad på dækket med udsigt over Muscat – Omans hovedstad – måske ligger sultanens 2 enorme flødefarvede lystyachter i havnen; havnepromenaden hedder i denne del af verden Corniche, og man kan gå ad den til souk'en – der er en guld-souk, en krydderi-souk, en tekstil-souk og en masse andre varer. En souk er et overdækket markedsområde. Der er naturligvis også et gammelt portugisisk fort, en stor moske og andre seværdigheder. Og så kan vi ligge i solstole på dækket og læse i "Det Lykkelige Arabien" om Carsten Niebuhr's ekspedition i 1761-1767.

Mandag d. 30. december:

Afsejling fra Muscat kl. 14.00. Skibet tilbyder også interessante udflugter i Oman – og i de øvrige anløbshavne - for dem, der har lyst til disse oplevelser. Der er et dagligt tilbud om aktiviteter på skibet – undervisning i forskellige danse, quiz, fysisk træning, selskabslege og meget andet. Og hver aften er der show i skibets teater. Det er som en luksusferie i et flydende 5 * hotel.

Tirsdag d. 31. december:

Der lægges til i Khasab kl. 08.00, og sejles igen kl. 16.00. Byen minder om en oase (12.000 indbyggere), og sidst vi besøgte stedet, var der en livlig sejlads med speedbåde over Hormuz strædet – amerikanske cigaretter sejles til Iran og geder tages med den modsatte vej. Området kaldes "Arabien Norge" pga. de mange fjorde. I området ligger Telegraph Island, som fik navnet, da englænderne i 1864 lagde en telegraflinje fra Indien til Europa.

Det er Nytårsaften, og der kan ikke være tvivl om, at vi vil opleve en meget festlig afslutning på det gamle år ombord på det italienske Costa Fortuna – italienere er gode festmennesker! "O Solo Mio" og "Happy New Year!"

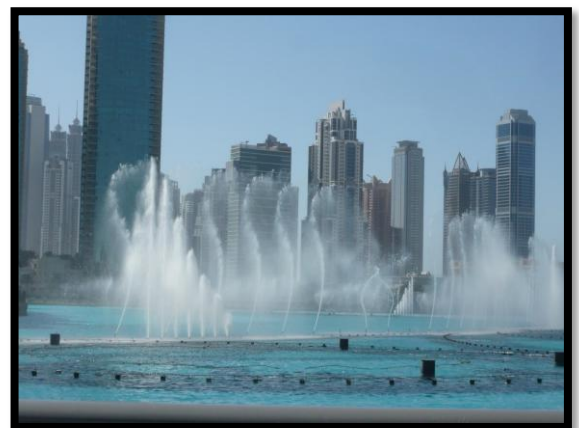
Onsdag d. 01. januar:

Skibet er i havn i Abu Dhabi kl. 09.00 til kl. 18.00. Abu Dhabi er præget af højhuse, brede motorveje og et tilsyneladende liv på 1. klasse. Det gælder i hvert fald for landets egne indbyggere, mens de mange gæstearbejdere nok lever under mindre fordelagtige forhold. Her findes verdens næststørste moske – Sheik Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan Mosque, der er opført i hvidt marmor, og kan rumme 40.000 troende. Her er 80 kupler båret af over 1000 søjler, et kæmpe gulvtæppe og gulddækkede krystallysekroner, der vejer 9 tons.

Abu Dhabi er det største og rigeste af de 7 forenede emirater, og de vil gerne være kulturelt førende. Man planlægger at opføre et imponerende kulturelt center med et lokalt Guggenheim, et Louvre, et Nationalmuseum, et Maritimt Museum og et stort Performance Art Center med teater, opera og flere scener. Her findes også Ferrari World, det storslåede hotel Emirates Palace, shoppingcentret Marine Mall og meget andet.

Torsdag d. 2. januar:

Ankomst til Dubai kl. 08.00. Her er mange seværdigheder – nogle vigtige steder at besøge er Dubai Mall, som er verdens største med 1200 butikker, kæmpeakvarium – et par dykkere er måske i vandet og håndfodrer rokker og hajer - indendørs waterfall, skøjtebane, en kunstig sø med verdens største springvand, der kan skyde vandet 150 meter op i luften. Vandstrålerne danser til arabisk musik hver halve time. Lige ved siden af ligger Burj-el-Kalifa, der er verdens højeste hus på 829 meter – over dobbelt så høj som Empire State Building i New York. I dette område kan man let tilbringe en dag – her er også mange caféer og restauranter.



Fredag d. 03. januar:

Vi checker ud fra skibet, og der er transfer fra Costa Fortuna til hotellet med 1 overnatning på Hotel Avenue (4*) på Riqqa Riad, Deira, Dubai. Hotellet ligger meget centralt og har et poolområde på taget med udsigt over byen. Der er gåafstand til byens gamle guld-souk – ”Vind 19 kg Guld” – og videre til krydderi-souken, hvor man kan købe iransk safran. Kun mænd arbejder i souk’ens butikker. Der er også en tekstil-souk, inden man kommer ud til floden Dubai Creek, hvor der er livlig aktivitet med losning af store dhow’s. Man sejler over floden for 1 Dirham, og kan spadsere langs vandet – Shindagha Waterfront – til museet indrettet i den nuværende regents bedstefars ørkenfortsagtige bolig.

Lørdag d. 04. januar:

Der er god tid til at se flere af Dubai’s imponerende nybyggerier f. eks. de kunstige øer The Palm og The World og luksushotellet Burj-el-Arab. Tag evt. en bytur med Hop-on-Hop-off-bussen. Måske vil man også slappe lidt af ved poolen og nyde solen. Ca. kl. 23.00 er der transfer fra hotellet til lufthavnen.

Søndag d. 05. januar:

Vi skal flyve med Austrian Airways fra Dubai til Wien kl. 02.30-05.55 og videre fra Wien til København kl. 07.15 med ankomst kl. 09.00. Mon ikke vi kommer hjem med masser af uforglemmelige oplevelser, masser af dejlige fotos og måske nye venner?

Pris:

Priserne er per person v/2 personer i kahytten.

Priser for enkeltkahyt:

a. Indvendig kahyt, Classic kr. 12.995

a. 15.595 kr.

b. Udvendig kahyt, Classic kr. 14.595

b. 16.995 kr.

c. Balkon kahyt, Classic kr. 16.995

c. 20.595 kr.

Kontakt evt. Martin Smedebøl, såfremt du ønsker hjælp med at finde en at dele kahyt med.

Prisen inkluderer:

- Fly København-Dubai t/r
- Lufthavnsafgifter, skatter og afgifter
- Alle transfers
- Hotel ifl. rejseplan inkl. morgenmad
- 7 nætters cruise med helpension
- Show og underholdning ombord

Prisen inkluderer ikke:

- Udflugter
- Drikkevarer
- Servicegebyr (ca. 7 euro per voksen per dag,)
- Spisning i specialrestauranter
- Evt. forsikringer

Rejseleder:

Martin Smedebøl og Karin Christiansen vil fungere som rejseledere på turen. Vi vil holde informationsmøder og get-to-gether sammenkomster undervejs på cruiset. Vi vil også i løbet af efteråret sende informationer om rejsen til deltagerne, og evt. invitere til rejsesammenkomst, så vi alle kan opleve forventningens glæder. Og efter rejsen kommer som sædvanlig en beretning om turen på www.smedebol.dk og en film til alle deltagerne.

Gruppestørrelse:

Martin og Karin vil samle 30 deltagere til denne nytårsrejse, og det bliver 10. gang, vi fejrer Nytårsaften udenlands med en gruppe glade mennesker. Informér gerne venner og familie om denne nytårsrejse – alle er velkomne.

Tilmelding:

Tilmelding gøres primært ved at udfylde tilmeldingskuponen og sende den til Martin Smedebøl, som vil viderebefordre den til Rejsebureauet MYCRUISE, der er specialister i krydstogtsrejser. De er også Medlem i Dansk Rejsebureauforening og tilknyttet Rejsegarantiordningen. De vil ordne alt vedrørende cruiset – betaling, etc.



Gode råd mht. Nytårsrejsen til Dubai og Oman med Cruise på Costa Fortuna.

Nogle råd er nyttige, nogle er vigtige – læs dem derfor nøje igennem! De er skrevet af Martin Smedebøl.

Klima:

- Forvent dagtemperaturer omkring 25° og ringe udsigt til regn
- Nætterne kan være lidt køligere
- Man bliver udsat for aircondition på skibet, i hoteller og i shoppingscentre

Indcheckning på Costa Fortune:

- Dette er forberedt af Mycruise, som har sendt basale oplysninger til Costa Cruises
- Ved ankomst til Costa Fortuna checkes man ind, og der tages print af kreditkortet eller kreditkortet registreres i specielle maskiner ombord; personale sørger for, at kufferterne bringes til kahytten. Man får et Costa Card, der fungerer som kahytsnøgle og betalingskort ombord.
- Costa Card er nødvendig for at få adgang til skibet og cruiseterminalen ved havneanløb
- Hvis man fremover planlægger flere krydstogtsferier med Costa, bør man tilmelde sig Costa Club - dette kan gøres ombord.

Prisniveau:

- Regn med at måltider på restaurant i UAE og Oman koster det samme som i Skandinavien
- På luksushoteller er priserne høje, og reservation i forvejen kræves ofte

Påklædning:

- På skibet har man almindeligt pænt tøj på i restauranterne – ikke shorts og badetøj
- Til festligere aftener kræves jakke og slips – eller måske noget endnu festligere?
- Husk badetøj og sportstøj + joggingsko til besøg i fitnesscenter på skibet
- Husk solhat, solbriller, solcreme o. lign.

Penge og kreditkort:

- Man kan veksle til UAE Dirham i danske banker
- Mastercard, Visa og Visa Electron bruges udbredt
- Diners Card og American Express er ikke lige så udbredt
- På cruiserejsen bør man have et internationalt kreditkort
- Pengene i Oman hedder Omani Rials; 1 OMR = 14,6 D. Kr.
- Pengene i UAE hedder UAE Dirham; 1 dirham = 1,5 D. Kr.
- ATM-maskiner findes ofte nær cruiseterminaler

Taxi:

- I UAE kører taxier på taximeter – prisniveauet er lavere end i Danmark
- I Oman findes taxier uden taximeter – aftal pris i forvejen
- Der kan være ekstraafgift på taxi som udgår fra cruiseterminaler (f.eks. i Dubai)

Cruiseterminaler:

- Her findes ofte turistinformation, souvenirshops, Internetadgang, WiFi, toilet, cafe, etc.
- Ofte er det ikke tilladt at gå i havneområdet – i så fald findes shuttlebus
- Lokale shoppingscentre kan undertiden tilbyde gratis shuttlebus fra havn til centret

Metro:

- Dubai har en ny og velfungerende metro – bygget af japanere
- Der er 2 linjer – grøn og rød
- Man bruger et specielt "red card" som betalingsmiddel
- Læs mere på www.dubaimetro.eu eller www.rta.ae

Telefonering og Internet:

- Det er dyrt at telefonere og bruge Internet fra krydstogtskibet, men muligheden findes
- Internetcafeer kan findes i land og i cruiseterminaler
- WiFi kan findes i cruiseterminaler, visse caféer (Starbuck) og visse shoppingscentre (Dubai Mall)
- Check med din egen mobiltelefonudbyder om priserne for at ringe og sende SMS til og fra Oman og UAE
- En smartphone giver adgang til mange nyttige apps f.eks. Dubai Metro, kort, etc.

Drikkepenge i Oman og UAE:

- Man er altid velkommen til at runde op på regningen - Brug den sunde fornuft efter den service, du har fået
- På restaurant kan man tillægge 10 %, hvis der ikke er skrevet serviceafgift på regningen
- På cruiseskibet er der obligatoriske drikkepenge, som automatisk trækkes fra passagerens kreditkort ved rejsens afslutning

Cruise:

- På www.costacruise.com kan man finde mange nyttige informationer om krydstogtet
- Man kan bestille udflugter via hjemmesiden, men det kan også gøres ombord

Drikkevarer på Costa Fortuna:

- Man må ikke medbringe alkohol ombord – det vil blive set ved gennemlysning ved ombordstigning og blive opbevaret til rejsens afslutning
- Costa sælger All-inclusive Drinks Package – de kræver, at alle i kahytten køber hver sin pakke. Det anbefales, at vente med at købe drikkevarepakker til vi er ankommet til skibet
- Vi har tidligere på Costa købt enklere pakker f.eks. i stil med 6 flasker vin og 7 flasker mineralvand

Sightseeing:

- Husk at besøg på egen hånd i verdens højeste hus bliver billigere ved forudbestilling via Internettet
- Husk at besøg på egen hånd i Burj al-Arab i Dubai kræver reservation
- Men: Ovenstående attraktioner indgår i nogle af Costa Cruises udflugter

Nogle arabiske ord:

Goddag	Al-salaam alaykum	Please	Min fafuak (til mand)
Goddag svar	Wa alaykum al-salaam	Please	Min fadiki (til kvinde)
Toilet	Al hamman	Ja	Na'am
Hvis Gud vil	Insha'alla	Nej	La
Godt Nytår	سنة جديدة سعيدة	Tak	Shukran

I wish you well for the coming year = Godt Nytår = Kul sana wa intum bikher
Men på denne rejse klarer man sig fint med sit skoleengelsk, tegnsprog og et smil.

Indkøb:

- Der er gode muligheder for at handle souvenirs med hjem
- I Dubai afholdes den årlige "Dubai Shopping Festival 2014" i januar
- I basarerne bør man "prutte" om priserne
- Husk toldreglerne for import fra ikke EU-lande – maksimumbeløb er 3250 D. Kr.
- Pas på med indførsel af ulovlige kopivarer og varer lavet af truede dyr etc.
- På Costa Fortuna findes også butikker med souvenirs

Nytårsaften:

- Vi planlægger ikke noget specielt arrangement for vores gruppe, men vi regner med, at Costa arrangerer en meget festlig afslutning på året

Guidebog:

- Lonely Planets "Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula" er god – og Internettet kan give mange informationer

Forhold vedr. flyrejsen:

- Vægt og dimensioner af bagage på Austrian Airlines er begrænset til 8 kg håndbagage og 23 kg indchecket bagage
- Sikkerhedskontrollen i lufthavnen tillader ikke skarpe ting, væsker over 100 ml og meget andet i håndbagagen – check evt. på www.austrian.com
- Austrian Airlines er med i Star Alliance – husk evt. Euro Bonus Card
- Parkering i Kastrup Lufthavn bør bestilles i forvejen – via Internettet. Men de offentlige transportmidler – tog, bus og Metro – kører lige til lufthavnen.

Måltider ombord på Costa Fortuna:

- Vi har på gruppens vegne bedt om middag ved 1. sitting, og vi regner med, at vi bliver placeret nogenlunde samlet i restauranten
- Morgenmad og frokost: man vælger selv tid og sted
- På skibet findes også "specialrestauranter", hvor det koster lidt ekstra at spise middag

Elektricitet:

- I Oman og UAE bruges 220 V og 3-benet stik af engelsk type – husk evt. adapter
- Costa Fortuna har stik til elektriske apparater af dansk type

Lokale skikke:

- Vær opmærksom på passende påklædning specielt ved besøg i moskéer – ikke shorts og små T-shirts, kvinder skal dække håret og være iført ankellang kjole.
- Nobel påklædning kræves ved besøg på 7* hoteller
- Almindelig omtanke ved fotografering af lokale personer – spørg først!
- Undlad at fotografere militære anlæg, lufthavne, o. lign.
- Man kan få alkohol på internationale hoteller, men ellers er det svært at købe alkohol i arabiske lande

Udflugter:

- Vi arbejder med en plan om at arrangere en særlig halvdagsudflugt for vores gruppe i Muscat. Den vil gå til Den Store Moske og Sultan's Armed Forces Museum. Prisen vil være ca. 250 kr.
- Costa Cruises tilbyder et varieret udflugtsprogram i Dubai, Muscat, Khasab og Abu Dhabi. Disse er beskrevet på www.costacruise.com - Der er også "pakkeløsninger" med 3 eller 4 udflugter. Såfremt man ønsker at deltage i disse udflugter, må man selv bestille dem – det kan gøres via hjemmesiden, eller når man kommer ombord
- Vi har forsøgt at opnå grupperabat på udflugter hos Costa, men det lykkedes ikke.
- Man kan også arrangere sine egne udflugter med taxi, lokale transportmidler eller Hop-on-Hop-off bus. Det vil – måske - være bedst, hvis man finder nogle medrejsende at følges med, og ved, hvad man vil se i de forskellige anløbshavne

- Undertiden lægger skibet til langt fra bycentrum – i så fald arrangeres transferbus mod betaling
- Rejselederen distribuerer et par papirer med forslag til sightseeing på egen hånd eller i mindre grupper – i Muscat er der forslag til en vandretur med eller uden deltagelse af rejselederen
- Man er ikke tvunget til at gå i land – nogle foretrækker at blive på skibet

Sikkerhed:

- Den generelle sikkerhed i UAE, Oman og på Costa Fortuna er ikke dårligere end i Europa.
- Brug safeboks i kahyt og hotelværelse til opbevaring af værdier
- Undgå at tage uerstattelige værdier med på rejse
- Hav penge, pas, etc. inderst på kroppen i ”pengekant”
- Vær generelt påpasselig, og specielt på steder, hvor der er mange mennesker f.eks. i lufthavne o. lign.

Vaccinationer:

- Ingen vaccinationer kræves
- WHO anbefaler, at rejsende er vaccinationsmæssigt dækket ind for difteri, stivkrampe, mæslinger, fåresyge, røde hunde, polio og hepatitis – tal evt. med egen læge eller vaccinationsklinik.

Rejseforsikring:

- En ordentlig rejsesygeforsikring er absolut nødvendig ved rejser udenfor Europa
- Der er læge ombord på Costa Fortuna – gem kvitteringer til evt. refundering hos rejseforsikringen

Pas:

- Glem ikke at medbringe passet
- Muligvis vil Costa Fortuna indsamle alle pas, og opbevare dem under cruiset – det letter paskontrollen i de forskellige anløbshavne

Arabiske helligdage:

- Ifølge den arabiske kalender vil vi være i år 1435. Nytåret falder d. 4.11.2013, Ashura (Husseins martyrium, han er Shiiternes imam) er d. 13.11.2013, Profetens fødselsdag er d. 13.1.2014, Ramadanen begynder d. 28.6.2014, Eid al-Fitr (fest ved afslutningen af Ramadanen) er d. 28.7.2014 og Eid al-Adha (fest for at markere tiden for pilgrimsrejse til Mekka) er d. 4.10.2014. Datoerne er lidt usikre, da det afhænger af, hvornår fuldmånen kan ses.
- Fredagen er arabisk helligdag, og nogle attraktionen kan være helt eller delvis lukket (f. eks. Dubai Metro)

Rejsemøde:

Der blev afholdt et rejsemøde hos Mycruise d. 4.10.2013 med 10 deltagere. Vi gennemgik rejseprogrammet, Gode Råd om rejsen, Alternative idéer til udflugter i Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Khasab og Dubai. De tilstedeværende fik disse informationer med hjem i skriftlig form, og de blev umiddelbart efter mødet mailet til de rejsedeltagere, som ikke deltog i mødet.

Yderligere informationer:

- Vi er nu 31 tilmeldte til rejsen, og der er plads til 9 mere
- Der vil i december fra Mycruise blive sendt brev til alle rejsedeltagerne med rejsedokumenter, information om mødetid og mødested, etc..

I øvrigt:

Kirsten Starup gjorde opmærksom på et møde om ”Barnebrude”, som arrangeres i FN-regi på Københavns Universitet, Chr. Hansen-salen på Kommunehospitalet. Det er d. 5.11.2013 kl. 16, og der er gratis adgang.

Kontakt til rejseledere:

- Martin Smedebøl og Karin Christiansen vil holde nogle informationsmøder ombord på Costa Fortuna
- Rejselederen kan altid kontaktes ved evt. spørgsmål – alle vil få oplyst vort kahytsnummer

Muscat

Lonely Planet foreslår en gåtur fra havnen til Old Muscat – se kortene. Turen er på 8 km og vil tage 4 – 5 timer. Husk en flaske vand! Man kan afkorte turen efter ønske og tage taxi tilbage til havnen.

Man kommer først til den gamle havn ved **Mutrah**. **Fiskemarkedet** (1,7) er aktivt kl. 6 – 10.

I **museet Bait Al-Baranda** (2,6) kan man lære om Muscats historie fra Dinosaurernes tid og fremover.

Strandpromenaden hedder **Corniche**, måske ser man Sultan Qaboos store lystyachter i havnen.

Besøg gerne **Mutrah Souq** (4,16) med mange boder og butikker – husk at ”prutte” om priserne. Nyd evt. en frugtjuice i Al-Ahli Coffeeshop (14) midt i souq'en. Man skal ikke gå ind i det historiske Al-Lawataya distrikt.

Mutrah Fort (8) er bygget af portugiserne i 1580'erne.

Fortsæt ad strandpromenaden til **guldfiske-monumentet og brønden** (6) og en stor røgelsesbrænder. Omans rigdom i ældre tid grundes på handel med røgelse (frankincense).

Ved **Al-Riyam Park** (7) kan man gå tilbage til Mutrah ad Ministry of Tourism's vandresti C38. På pynten ligger et gammelt portugisisk **vagttårn** (8).

Ved Kalbuh Bay Park (9) kan man fortsætte ind i landet ad Al-Bahri Road og komme ind i **Old Muscat** via **Muscat Gate Museum** (10) med den originale byport, som fungerede frem til 1970.

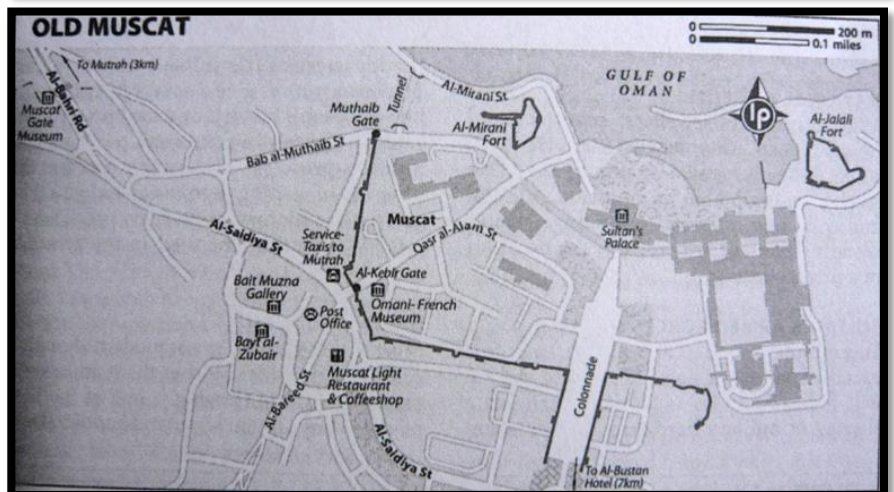
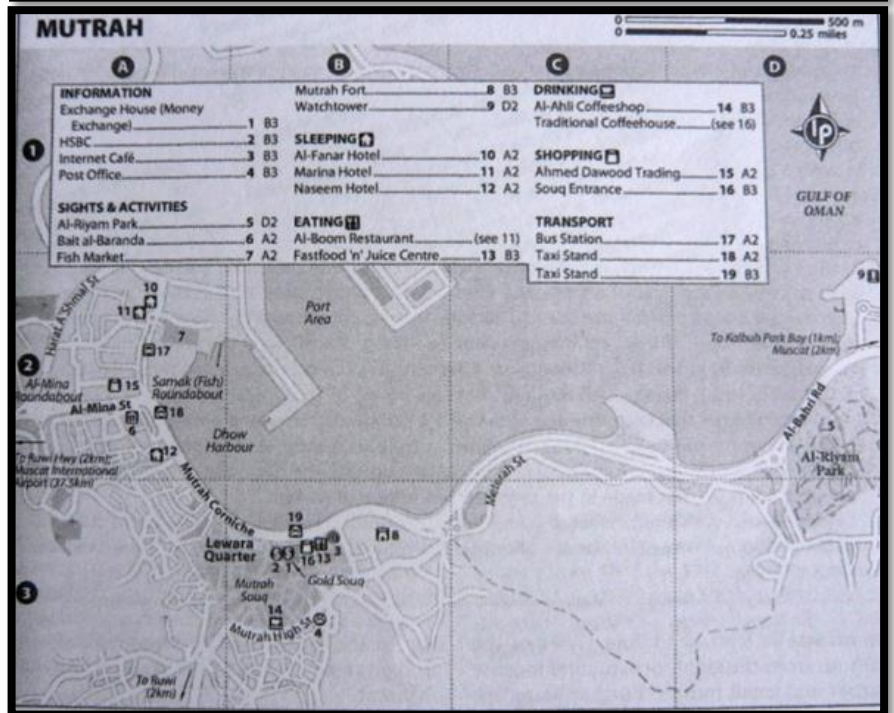
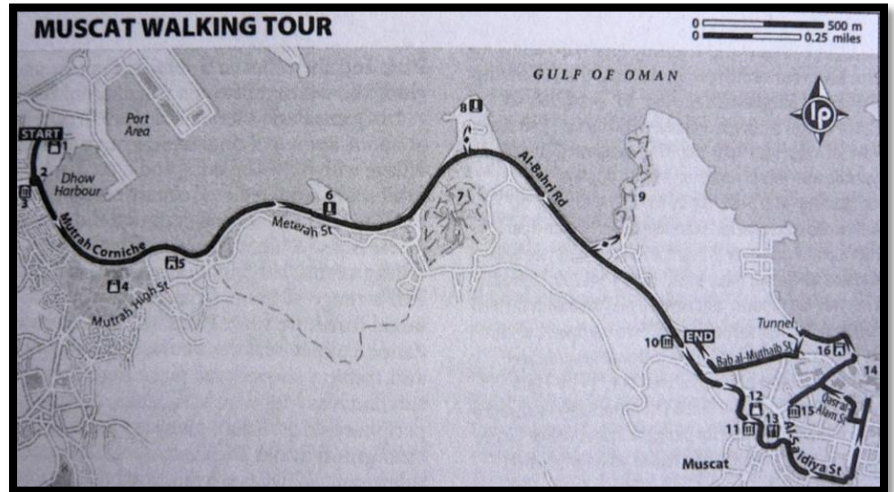
Fra Muscat Gate Museum kan man vælge at besøge **Bait al-Zubair** – et smukt restaureret hus, hvor der er udstillet historiske fotos, møbler og kunsthåndværk.

Man fortsætter til kolonnaden foran **Sultanens Palads** og følger paladsmuren til venstre forbi smukke haver. Paladset er bygget på stedet, hvor den tidligere britiske ambassade lå. Der var en flagstang, og hvis en slave kunne nå frem og berøre flagstangen, opnåede han friheden.

Man kan besøge **Omani-French Museum** eller gå til havnen og beskue de **gamle portugisiske forter** Al-Mirani og Al-Jalali (De er ikke åbne for offentligheden).

Ved al-Bahri Street ikke langt fra **Old City Gate** kan man få taxi tilbage til Mutrah.

Al-Bustan Palace Hotel er et meget eksklusivt hotel bygget i 1985. I den nærliggende rundkørsel står en model af skibet **Sohar**, som den berømte søfarer Ahmed bin Majid sejlede til Kina i i det 8-ende århundrede. En stor seværdighed i Muscat er **Grand Mosque**.



Alternative planer for udflugter i Dubai, Abu Dhabi og Khasab

Khasab:

En lille fiskerby, som næsten ligner en oase med omliggende ørkenagtige bjerge. Man ser ofte speedbåde, der smugler cigaretter til Iran og tager geder med tilbage. Costa tilbyder udflugter med sejlads i dhow til fjorde – landskabet kaldes ”det arabiske Norge”. Der kan også være udflugter i 4WD til omgivelserne.

Man kan købe transfer fra havnen til byen, spadsere rundt på egen hånd og se moskeen, en lille souq, Khasab Fort med et museum. Der er 12.000 indbyggere, og det virker lidt landsbyagtigt. Husk at medbringe vand.

Abu Dhabi:

Storby med 1,6 millioner indbyggere og en skyline som en amerikansk storby. Vigtigste seværdigheder er Sheik Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan Mosque og Emirates Palace. Man kan lave sin egen sightseeing med taxi, som kører med taximeter.

Moskeen er overdådig i hvidt marmor, 80 kupler, 1000 søjler, verdens største persiske tæppe og 7 store krystallysekroner (den største vejer 9 tons). Husk passende beklædning – ikke shorts og bare arme.

Emirates Palace er et overdådigt hotel i marmor, guld og krystal med 400 værelser. Der er i forhallen en udstilling om de kulturelle byggerier, som planlægges på Sadiyat Island – Guggenheim, Louvre, Maritime Museum, National Museum og Performing Arts Centre tegnet af kendte internationale arkitekter. Pæn påklædning er en forudsætning for at få adgang.

Man kan fortsætte til Breakwater og besøge **Abu Dhabi Heritage Village**, der viser en ”turistet” fremstilling af livet i det gamle Abu Dhabi. Nærvæd ligger det store shoppingcenter **Marina Mall**.

Der er også åbnet en ny forlystelsespark **Ferrari World** Abu Dhabi. Costa tilbyder også et udvalg af udflugter i Abu Dhabi – se www.costacruise.com

Dubai:

Dubai er en moderne storby med 1,7 mill. indbyggere og meget kendt moderne arkitektur. Man kan komme rundt i Dubai med taxi, som er relativt billige og kører på taximeter. Der er også en Metro med 2 linjer – en rød og en grøn. Man kan købe dagkort. Se www.dubaimetro.eu

Downtown Dubai:

Burj Khalifa: verdens højeste hus, 828 meter, indeholder kontorer, boliger og Armani hotel. Flot at se udefra. Udsigtsplatformen At the Top ligger på 124. ende etage i 442 meters højde – det er dyrt at komme derop – billigere hvis man bestiller billet online i forvejen.

Dubai Mall: verdens største shoppingcenter med 1200 flotte butikker, skøjtebane, akvarium, moderne kunst, mange restauranter og caféer, etc.

Dubai Fountain: ”musikalsk” springvand, der underholder 3 gange i timen.

Old Dubai:

Dubai Creek: floden går gennem Dubai, og her er der meget liv dagen lang. På den nordøstlige Deira-side lægger dhow's til, og på den sydvestlige Shindagha Waterfront er der en dejlig promenade med restauranter og museer f. eks. Sheikh Saeed al-Maktoum House, som engang tilhørte den nuværende regents bedstefar.

Man krydser Dubai Creek på traditionelle træbåde – abra.

Dubai Souq: traditionel arabisk souq med mange afdelinger f. eks. tøj, parfume, guld, safran, smykker, læder, osv.

Andre kendte seværdigheder:

Følgende ligger 10 km fra Downtown og ses måske bedst fra helikopter eller fra Burj Khalifa eller på Google Earth:

Burj al Arab: 7-stjernet hotel, formet som sejl, dyrt, reservation kræves

The Palm og The World: kunstige øer beregnet til luksusboliger. **Atlantis the Palm** er et storslået hotel med water park, akvarium og delfinarium

Andet: skibakke, wild wadi river park, camel racing, desert safaris, horseracing, bird watching, beaches, water worlds, dolphin bay, etc. Alt dette må man udforske og arrangere på egen hånd.

Costa tilbyder også forskellige udflugter i Dubai, og der er Hop-On-Hop-Off-Bus.

Quiz 1 – om Oman.

Der kan godt være mere end et rigtigt svar – og alle kan måske også være forkerte.

- Hvad hedder regenten i Oman?
 - Sultan Qaboos bin Said
 - Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan
 - President Ali Abdullah Saleh
 - Emir Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah
- Hvor har Regenten i Oman studeret?
 - Kuwait, Harvard University (USA) og West Point (USA)
 - Salalah (Oman), Pune (Indien) og Royal Military Academy (England)
 - Humboldt Universitetet (Østtyskland) og Moskva Universitet
 - Karachi (Pakistan) og University of Tel Aviv (Israel)
- Hvordan er Regenten i Oman's familiære situation?
 - Han har en dronning og et harem med 16 konkubiner
 - Han har 24 børn
 - Han har hverken hustru eller børn
 - Han lever helt alene som eremit
- Hvad er "Renaissancen" i Oman?
 - Storhedstid for 5000 år siden hvor man blev rige ved udvinding af guld og frankincense (røgelse)
 - Perioden under den portugisiske indflydelse omkring 1500-tallet
 - Tiden med perlefiskeri i 1800-tallet
 - Opgangen fra 1970 under den nuværende regent
- Hvem er Amami Samir Fancy?
 - Meget dygtig skøjteprinsesse fra Oman – findes der overhovedet skøjteprinsesser i Oman?
 - Omans eneste nobelpristager i litteratur – findes der overhovedet nobelpristagere fra Oman?
 - Fotomodel fra Oman – arbejder hos Dior i Paris – finder der overhovedet fotomodeler fra Oman?
 - Kvindelig bigamist, som blev stenet i Muscat i juli 2013 – er der overhovedet dødsstraf i Oman?
- I indledningen til *Beschreibung von Arabien*, 1772, gør Niebuhr sig sine tanker om årsagen til, at ekspeditionen gik galt: "Jeg tror snarere, at vi selv var skyld i vore sygdomme, og altså at andre let kan beskytte sig imod dem. Vort selskab var for stort til, at vi i tide kunne have indrettet os på at leve som landets befolkning. I visse måneder havde vi slet ikke kunnet få nogen stærk drik, hvilket vi ellers var vant til, og alligevel spiste vi bestandig kødspiser, hvad der i alle varme lande anses for at være usundt. Efter varme dage var den kolde aftenluft så behagelig for os, at vi udsatte os for den i for høj grad. Vi burde også have været meget mere opmærksomme på den meget mærkbare temperaturforskel i bjergrige egne og på lave sletter. Vi havde for meget hastværk med vor rejse til, at vi kunne lære det indre af landet at kende."
 - Christian d.4 finansierede ekspeditionen til Det lykkelige Arabien
 - Carsten Niebuhr var den eneste af de 6 ekspeditionsdeltagere, som nåede Oman – de andre døde forinden
 - Alt materiale, som blev indsamlet på ekspeditionen, forsvandt desværre, inden det nåede Danmark
 - Malariaparasitten Plasmodium falciforme var meget frygtet af ekspeditionsdeltagerne
- Ved besøg i Grand Mosque i Oman gælder følgende?
 - Man må ikke tage skoene af
 - Man må gerne berøre Koranen
 - Man skal sidde med fødderne bagud, hvis man sidder på det store tæppe – det er uhøfligt at vise fødderne frem mod muslimer
 - Man er velkommen i slidte jeans og en laset T-shirt
- Man kan i Oman altid få lidt til den søde tand – hvad er sandt?
 - Halwa er klistrede lækkerier fremstillet af sukker, dadler, safran, kardemomme, mandler, kastanje og rosenvand
 - Kogende honning har i Oman været brugt som våben mod fjender
 - Qahwa er stærk arabisk kaffe med kardemomme
 - Dadler serveres næsten ved hvert måltid
- Sultanen af Oman har flere skibe – den største hedder "Al Said". Hvad er sandt om denne yacht?
 - Den er 155 meter lang og bygget i Bremen
 - Der er en besætning på 140 personer, og der er plads til 70 gæster
 - Man kan lande en helikopter på skibet, som også har en koncertsal til et 50-mands orkester.
 - Steven Spielbergs yacht "Seven Seas" er større end "Al Said" – og kan lejes for 10 millioner kr. om ugen.
- Om Muscat gælder:
 - Byen blev hovedstad i Oman i 1793
 - Byporten blev lukket hver nat indtil 1970
 - Portugiserne erobrede byen i 1507, men omanerne generobrede den i 1650
 - Byen er 50 km lang og siges ofte at udgøres af de 3 byer Muscat, Mutrah og Ruwi

Quiz 2 – om Abu Dhabi

- Hvad er en djambiya?
 - Karakteristisk arabisk havgående skib
 - Krum arabisk dolk
 - Vandpibe
 - Hvid arabisk mandsdragt
- Hvad betyder Abu Dhabi?
 - Landet med olie
 - Hjortenes Fader
 - Perlemorslandet
 - Varme og Sand
- Hvor mange af indbyggerne i Abu Dhabi er udlændige?
 - 25 %
 - 50 %
 - 75 %
 - 95 %
- Hvor mange emirater er sluttet sammen i UAE?
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
- Hvor stor en del arealmæssigt udgør Abu Dhabi af UAE?
 - 20 %
 - 40 %
 - 60 %
 - 80 %
- Hvad hedder hovedstaden i UAE?
 - Dubai
 - Abu Dhabi
 - Sharjah
 - Fujairah
- Hvad gælder om homoseksualitet i UAE?
 - Er forbudt og kan give 10 års fængsel
 - Er forbudt under Ramadanen
 - En ikke ulovligt
 - Eksisterer ikke
- Hvad var GDP per capita i UAE i 2012? (I Danmark og Sverige var den 55.000 \$)
 - 25.000 \$
 - 45.000 \$
 - 65.000 \$
 - 85.000 \$
- Hvad er sandt om Bu Tinah?
 - Det er en ø-gruppe 100 km fra Abu Dhabi
 - Bu Tinah er en af 28 finalister i nomineringen til New 7 Wonders of Nature
 - Bu Tinah er hjemsted for mange truede dyreracer bl.a. skildpadder
 - Leonardo Dicaprio har en luksusvilla på Bu Tinah
- Hvor mange dadelpalmer findes i UAE?
 - Under 10 millioner
 - Under 20 millioner
 - Under 30 millioner
 - Over 40 millioner
- Emirates Hotel pralede af verdens dyreste juletræ i 2010 – hvad var prisen?
 - 11.000 \$
 - 110.000 \$
 - 1.100.000 \$
 - 11.000.000 \$
- UAE opmuntrer til at UAE-mænd gifter sig med UAE-kvinder. Hvad får man i Marriage Fund?
 - 10.000 Dirham
 - 40.000 Dirham
 - 70.000 Dirham
 - 100.000 Dirham
- Hvad er minimumslønnen for philippinske tjenestepiger i UAE?
 - 4 \$ om måneden
 - 40 \$ om måneden
 - 400 \$ om måneden
 - 4000 \$ om måneden
- Hvad er raqs sharqi (شرقية رقص)?
 - Beduinrøvere
 - Mavedans
 - Vandpiberygning
 - Navnet på Formel 1 banen i Abu Dhabi
- Hvad er sandt om det arabiske sprog?
 - Arabisk har 28 bogstaver
 - Arabisk skrives fra højre mod venstre
 - Skriftsproget standard arabisk forstås af alle arabere
 - Talesproget arabisk varierer meget mellem landene
- Hvad er en shisha (شيشة eller أركيلة)?
 - Et arabisk musikinstrument
 - Den hellige Koran
 - En vandpibe
 - Arabisk wienerbrød
- Kinesisk, engelsk, spansk, hindi og arabisk er mest talte sprog – på hvilken plads i rækken kommer arabisk?
 2. plads
 3. plads
 4. plads
 5. plads
- Hvad er sandt om det arabiske krydderi safran?
 - Det er verdens dyreste krydderi
 - Det går 75.000-100.000 krokusblomster til 1 kg safran
 - Safran har tidligere været brugt mod øjenbetændelse
 - Plinius den Ældre påstod, at safran før måltidet hindrede, at vinen berusede
- Carsten Niebuhr tegnede meget nøjagtige kort over området ved Abu Dhabi i 1760'erne. Hvornår blev Abu Dhabi grundlagt – efter at man fandt vand?
 - 1593
 - 1693
 - 1793
 - 1893
- Hvad er sandt om Hormuz-strædet?
 - Det er 39 km på det smalleste sted
 - 20 % af verdens råolie sejles gennem strædet
 - En amerikansk undervandsbåd ramte en japansk olietanker i 2007 i Hormuz-strædet
 - Navnet kommer måske af dadelpalme

Quiz 3 – om United Arab Emirates

- Trafikken er farlig i UAE – hvad er mest sandt?
 - Ingen børn omkommer, for de bruger sikkerhedsbæltet
 - Der dør 7 gange flere i trafikken i UAE end i England
 - Der registreres ingen trafikulykker forårsaget af alkohol
 - De fleste ulykker skyldes kollision med kamel
- Falken er UAE's nationalfugl – hvad er sandt?
 - Jagt med falke er tilladt i UAE
 - En falk koster op til 5.000\$ - 80.000\$ i UAE
 - En falk spiser en kylling om ugen
 - Falkehospitalet i Abu Dhabi behandler 600 falke om året
- Om de traditionelle sportsgrene i UAE gælder følgende:
 - Den arabiske jagthund hedder saluki
 - Man bruger fjernstyrede robotjockey'er til kamelvæddeløb
 - Ved dhow-racing kan hvert skib have 100 roere
 - I UAE har man indført pas til falke
- Hvad er Saadiyat Island i Abu Dhabi?
 - Område med verdens største oliereserver
 - Område reserveret til kulturelle institutioner
 - Område med specialfængsel efter sharia-lovgivning
 - Område med verdens største Disney World
- Automater for guld – hvad er sandt?
 - En automat findes i Emirates Palace i Abu Dhabi
 - Man kan købe guldbarrer på 10 gram og guldmønter
 - Sådanne automater findes på 3 kontinenter
 - Automaterne er en vesttysk opfindelse
- Hvad er sandt om guld?
 - Alt guld på jorden stammer fra supernova-eksplosioner
 - Der produceres 2700 tons guld i verden hvert år
 - Kina er største producent af guld
 - 1 gram guld kan bankes ud til 1 m²
- Hvad er sandt om Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque i Abu Dhabi?
 - De 7 store lysekroner kommer fra Tyskland
 - Sheikh Zayed er selv begravet på området
 - Gulvtæppet kommer fra Iran og vejer 35 tons
 - Moskéen kan rumme 40.000 mennesker
- Vand er vigtigt i UAE – hvad er sandt?
 - Gennemsnitligt antal årlige dage med regn er ca. 13 i Abu Dhabi
 - Grundvandet i Abu Dhabi kan indeholde 8 gange mere salt end havvand
 - Ca. 25 % af vandforsyningen i Abu Dhabi kommer fra afsaltet havvand
 - Abu Dhabis egne borgere betaler ikke for vand – udlændinge gør
- Et cruiseskib producerer selv det meste vand ved filtration – hvor meget kræves?
 - Ca. 50 l/dag/person ombord
 - Ca. 100 l/dag/person ombord
 - Ca. 300 l/dag/person ombord
 - Ca. 1000 l/dag/person ombord
- Det er varmt i Abu Dhabi – men hvad er sandt?
 - Højeste registrerede temperatur er 48°
 - Højeste dagtemperatur i juli og august er over 40°
 - Der kan være nattefrost om vinteren
 - 70 % af al energi i Abu Dhabi bruges til air condition
- Hvad er sandt om livet i Abu Dhabi?
 - Den traditionelle hvide mandsdragt hedder thawb
 - En Abu Dhabi mand har gennemsnitlig 50 kanduras
 - Abaya er den sorte overklædning til kvinder
 - Begge dragter er velegnede i det varme tørre klima
- Abu Dhabi har flere venskabsbyer – hvilke?
 - Roskilde
 - København
 - Stockholm
 - Oslo
- Islam er officiel religion i Abu Dhabi – hvad der rigtigt?
 - Man skal bede 5 gange daglig
 - Islams 5 søjler er: tro, bøn, velgørenhed, faste og pilgrimsrejse til Mekka
 - Der er religionsfrihed i Abu Dhabi
 - Jødedommen er forbudt i Abu Dhabi
- Om Ramadanen gælder følgende:
 - Ramadanen falder altid i august hvert år
 - Iftar er tidspunktet om morgenen, når dagens faste starter.
 - Eid-Al-Fitr markerer starten af Ramadanen
 - Ramadanen fejres til minde om Muhammeds erobring af Jerusalem
- Hvad er ADIA?
 - En opera af Verdi
 - En meget rig investeringsfond i Abu Dhabi
 - Fodboldklub i Abu Dhabi
 - Kendt joggingsko mærke
- Hvad er sandt om Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan?
 - Han var Abu Dhabi's store landsfader og grundlægger af UAE
 - Han fik en nyretransplantation i USA, da han var 82 år
 - Han var gift 6 gange og fik 28 børn
 - Han fik kun en rudimentær skolegang
- Sport i Abu Dhabi – hvad mon er rigtigt?
 - Der findes mange førsteklases golfbaner
 - En sheik har købt Manchester United
 - Drifting er populært i UAE
 - Man kan dyrke sandboarding i UAE
- Seværdigheder i Abu Dhabi – true or false?
 - En 125 meter høj flagstang findes i Abu Dhabi
 - Corniche er et berømt shoppingcenter i Abu Dhabi
 - Al Ain er et kamelmarked i Abu Dhabi
 - En kvinde fra Abu Dhabi har været på Nordpolen
- Arkæologi i Abu Dhabi – er følgende sandt?
 - Arkæologer fra Moesgaard Museum påbegyndte udgravninger i Abu Dhabi i 1958
 - P.V. Glob ville finde Edens Have i Bahrein
 - Dronning Margrethe har deltaget i udgravninger i Abu Dhabi
 - Man fandt Dødehavsrullerne i Abu Dhabi
- Og til slut – rigtigt eller forkert?
 - Briterne forbød slavehandel i området i 1839, men det forekom helt op til 1950'erne
 - Mindst 200 danske firmaer har etableret sig i UAE
 - De fleste UAE-borgere er sunni-muslimer
 - Hvem af deltagerne i Nytårsrejsen har været skolekammerat med Danmarks ambassadør i UAE?

Quiz 4 – om Dubai

- Hvad er abra?
 - Arabisk musikinstrument
 - Lille båd, der krydser Dubai Creek
 - Hovedret fra arabisk menukort
 - Trylleformular
- Hvad er Bastakia?
 - Fint restaureret kvarter i Dubai
 - Dessert med dadler
 - Dubais Præsident
 - Arabisk kampsport
- Dubais ældste hus er fra 1799 – hvad er der nu?
 - Hovedpostkontor
 - Præsidentpalads
 - Hospital
 - Dubai Museum
- Op til 13.000 mand arbejde på at bygge Burj Khalifa. Hvor lang tid tog byggeriet?
 - 2 år
 - 6 år
 - 10 år
 - 14 år
- Man kan stå på ski i Dubai – hvor lang er skibakken iflg. Lonely Planet?
 - 100 meter
 - 400 meter
 - 1000 meter
 - 4000 meter
- Hvad er Kan Zaman?
 - Hyggelig café ved Dubai Creek
 - Kendt popsanger fra Dubai
 - Navnet på verdens højeste bygning
 - Designer vandpiber
- 30.000 arbejdere byggede Dubai Metro på 4 år – hvad er sandt?
 - Metroen er automatisk og førerløs
 - Der er særlige vogne for kvinder
 - Metroen kører ikke fredag formiddag
 - Der er en "Gold Class" med tæpper og lædermøbler
- Hvad er makbus, hareis og umm ali?
 - Odrer som kan styre en kamel
 - Retter på et spisekort i Dubai
 - Arabiske kælenavne for jagtfalken
 - Stationer i Dubai Metro
- Hvad er khuzi?
 - Fylt stegt lam på et leje af krydret ris
 - Budding med rosiner og nødder
 - Gryderet med ris og fisk eller kød
 - Langtidsstegt lammesteg
- Hvordan bor asiatiske ufaglærte arbejdere i Dubai?
 - I 3* hoteller
 - I jordhuler
 - I lejre med 10-15 i hvert værelse
 - I gode egne lejligheder
- Hvem var Dr. Ahmed al-Madani (1931-1995)?
 - Berømt hjertekirurg fra Dubai
 - Berømt poet fra Dubai
 - Berømt arkitekt og ingeniør fra Dubai
 - Berømt rocksanger fra Dubai
- Hvad er Masdar City?
 - Et kæmpestort casino i Dubai
 - Et megastort shoppingcenter
 - Verdens første kuldioxidneutrale by for 50.000 beboere
 - Et pladestudio i Dubai
- Hvad hændte i Dubai i 2008/2009?
 - Dubai meldte sig ind i UAE
 - Dubai blev hårdt ramt af finanskrisen
 - Dubai indviede den første bro over Dubai Creek
 - Dubai fejrede byens 500 års jubilæum
- Hvad er Jumeirah Mosque?
 - Eneste moske i Dubai som er åben for udlændinge
 - Moske, som tilbyder kulturel undervisning af udlændinge
 - Det arabiske navn for McDonald
 - Navnet på Dubai International Airport
- Verdens højeste bygning hedder Burj Khalifa – hvorfor?
 - Til ære for præsident Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, der sørgede for, at Abu Dhabi reddede Dubai under finanskrisen
 - Til ære for Muhamed, der havde titel som Khalifa
 - Til ære for ingeniørkunsten – Khalifa betyder "størst i verden" på arabisk
 - Til ære for Dubai – Khalifa er et andet navn for byen Dubai
- Dubai er glade for turister – hvor mange besøger landet årligt?
 - 2 millioner
 - 5 millioner
 - 9 millioner
 - 18 millioner
- Om ægteskaber i UAE gælder?
 - De fleste unge finder partnere på dating-sider på Internettet
 - De fleste ægteskaber ender i skilsmisse
 - De fleste mænd har 4 koner
 - Man bruger ikke medgift ved ægteskaber

History of Oman

Oman's history tells stories of heroism, courage, wisdom, patriotism, love and devotion to homeland. This brings us closer to understanding the richness of the Omani cultural experience which has contributed to the building of modern Oman. **Oman's strategic location** has played a major role in many campaigns and regional conflicts in this region. Oman overlooks the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. It also controls the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most important facilities in the region, linking the Sea of Oman with the Arabian Gulf. The Strait of Hormuz is a gateway to all ships coming from the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

Al Wattih in Muscat Governorate is **one of the first inhabited cities**. Modern archaeological discoveries suggest that humans settled in it during the Stone Age, i.e. more than 10,000 years ago. The Babylonians and the Assyrians settled in Oman because they wanted to control the trade route that linked Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

With **the spread of Islam**, and Mazin Bin Gadhuhah joining Islam as the first person in Oman and his emigration to Medina to meet the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, the first mosque was built in Oman. This is Al Midhmar Mosque that still stands to this day in Wilayt Samail. These events paved the way for the two kings of Oman at that time, Jua'fer and Abd Ibni Al Jalandi, to enter Islam wholeheartedly and with utter conviction after receiving a letter from the Prophet, Peace be upon Him. A Hadith mentions that the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, said "God's mercy be on the people of Al Ghubaira" (i.e. the people of Oman). "They have believed in me although they had not seen me". Also stated in the sermon our Master Abu Bakr Al-Sidiq, the caliph of the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, to the people of Oman: "People of Oman you, you have entered Islam voluntarily although the Prophet has not come to your land on foot or on horse. You have not opposed him as other Arabs opposed him, and you have not called for separation or dispersion. May God unite you in benevolence." With the election of Ibn Masood, the first imam, in 751 AD, the Imamate era began in Oman and lasted four centuries until 1154. Several attempts were made to restore the rule of the Imamate in Oman in the mid-fifteenth century, but did not succeed.

During the period 1498-1507 AD, the Portuguese tried to control Oman. Omani history tells the story of the Omani people who expelled the Portuguese with their struggle and heroism. Nasser bin Murshid was elected Imam in 1624. Because of the coastal location of Oman, the Omani navy occupied a leading position regionally. This sparked the ire of the Portuguese, who did not forget their devastating defeat. Fierce battles erupted between the Portuguese Navy (which had made India its base after the liberation of Oman) and the strong Omani navy. After a fierce battle, the Omani fleet was able to defeat the Portuguese fleet. **In 1698, the Omani Empire then expanded to include the cities of the African east coast, stretching from Mombasa to Kila, Zanzibar, Pemba and Bata.** Mozambique remained under Portuguese rule until the twentieth century.

Oman had been the target of a number of attempts by the Persians to invade its territory, but the steadfastness and heroism of the Omanis were successfully combined to defeat the occupier. The invaders were defeated, underscoring the exploits of Omani heroes in defending their lands. This great victory was achieved at the hands of Imam Ahmed bin Saeed Al Busaidi, who defeated the Persians and was elected imam. With the advent of 1970 came the dawn of a modern renaissance in the Sultanate, with the beginning of the prosperous era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may God protect him.

Qaboos bin Said Al Bu Saidi (født 18. november 1940) er sultan af Oman siden 1970, hvor han var med til at vælte sin far. Han er den 14. generation af Al Bu Sa'idi familiedynastiet. Han er født i Salalah i Dhofar-regionen af Oman og var faderen, Said bin Taimurs eneste søn med prinsesse Mazoon al Mashani. Han er uddannet i Salalah og i Pune, Indien og blev sendt til England som 16-årig, hvor han kom på privatskole og siden fik en militærudannelse. Sultan Qabus er en af verdens to sultaner, den anden er sultanen af Brunei. Sultan Qabus er, som størstedelen af Omans indbyggere, **muslim der praktiserer efter lbadi-traditionen**, som adskiller sig fra både sunni- og shia-retningerne.

Sultan Qabus har et nært forhold til det britiske kongehus, og da han i 2011 fejrede sit 40-års jubilæum som sultan af Oman, kom Dronning Elisabeth 2. da også på besøg i landet. Han har ikke nogen direkte arving, har kun været gift i en meget kort periode som helt ung og der er mange spekulationer over¹, hvem der mon vil efterfølge ham på tronen – og ikke mindst hvad der så vil ske i Oman, som hidtil under Sultan Qabus' herredømme har nydt godt af en stabil og solid fremgang. Det forlyder, at han har valgt at overlade valget af sin efterfølger til familien, som skal samles og komme til en beslutning, når den tid er.

Sultan Qabus har paladser rundt omkring i landet, og har ry for ifølge traditionen at tage på turné om sommeren, hvor han bosætter sig i de forskellige provinser, og her kan folket så søge at få fortræde for ham. Oman har set betydelig fremgang i hans regeringstid, blandt andet er **uddannelse garanteret alle**, der er bygget adskillige universiteter ligesom **alle har adgang til sundhedspleje**. I hans tid er det bjergrige Oman også blevet udstyret med et velfungerende net af motor- og landeveje. Kuppet mod hans far Said bin Taimur Al Said, der havde holdt landet i et middelalderligt jerngreb, foregik, ved at **en vagt skød faderen i foden**, da kun et kup med udgydelse af blod blev regnet for fuldgyldigt.

Qaboos bin Said Al Said (Arabic: **سعيد بن قابوس** Qābūs bin Sa'īd 'Al Sa'īd; born 18 November 1940) is the Sultan of Oman and its Dependencies. He rose to power after overthrowing his father, Said bin Taimur, in a palace coup in 1970. He is the 14th-generation descendant of the founder of the Al Bu Sa'idi dynasty. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id was born in Salalah in Dhofar on 18 November 1940. He is the only son of Sultan Said bin Taimur and princess Mazoon al-Mashani. He received his primary and secondary education at Salalah and Pune, India and was sent to a private educational establishment in England at age sixteen. At 20 he entered the **Royal Military Academy Sandhurst**. After graduating from Sandhurst, he joined the British Army and was posted to the 1st Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), serving in Germany for one year. He also held a staff appointment with the British Army. After his military service, Sultan Qaboos studied local government subjects in England and, after a world tour, returned home to Salalah where he studied Islam and the history of his country.

Qaboos acceded to the throne on 23 July 1970 with the aim of ending the country's isolation and using its oil revenue for modernization and development, moving to Muscat. There he declared that the country would no longer be known as Muscat and Oman, but would change its name to "the Sultanate of Oman" in order to better reflect its political unity.

The first pressing problem that Qaboos bin Said faced as Sultan was an armed communist insurgency from South Yemen, the Dhofar Rebellion (1965–1975). The Sultanate eventually defeated the incursion with help from the Shah of Iran, Jordanian troops sent from his friend King Hussein of Jordan, British Special Forces, and the Royal Air Force. The political system which Qaboos established is that of an absolute monarchy. Unlike the

situation in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, Qaboos' decisions are not subject to modification by other members of Oman's royal family. Government decisions are said to be made through a process of decision-making by "consensus" with provincial, local and tribal representatives, though critics allege that Qaboos exercises de facto control of this process, Qaboos also regularly engages in tours of his realm, in which any citizen with a grievance or request is allowed to appeal to the Sultan in person. More recently, Qaboos has allowed parliamentary elections (in which women have voted and stood as candidates) and pledged greater openness and participation in government. The parliament enjoys legislative and oversight powers. In 1979 Oman was the only Arab state to recognize Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace agreement with Israel.

Qaboos' supporters point to his relative success in governing the country. By Gulf standards, Oman boasts good public order, middling prosperity, and a relatively permissive society. Since Qaboos acceded to the throne, Oman has broadened international relations, allowed newspapers, established high schools, built highways, opened hotels and shopping malls and spends a substantial portion of its dwindling oil revenues on health care and education. In September 1995, he was involved in a car accident in Salalah just outside his palace, which claimed the life of one of his most prominent and influential ministers and his right hand man, Qais Bin Abdul Munaim Al Zawawi.

In October 1998, Qaboos bin Said was presented with the International Peace Award by the National Council on US-Arab Relations. He also forges and maintains good relations with other Arab states and partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Qaboos officially keeps Oman neutral, having contacts and normal relations with Iran while being an ally of western states like Britain and America. In talks with American officials released by Wikileaks, Qaboos dodged requests by the Americans for Oman to invest in Iraq and Afghanistan, switching to other topics. Qaboos was against Americans withdrawing quickly from Iraq. Oman has more normal relations with Iran than the other Gulf Arab states, careful to appear neutral and maintain a balance between the West and Iran.

Qaboos criticized the Arab Nationalist leader Gamal Abdel Nasser in private discussions with American officials which were released by Wikileaks. He claimed Nasser deliberately used inflammatory speeches and rhetoric to make his people stupid, and accused Nasser of having "set the region back", holding a position of "anti-everything". Qaboos concluded that the Muslim Brotherhood obtained support from the uneducated people. Sultan Qaboos ibn Sa'id is a Muslim of the Ibadi school of jurisprudence, which has traditionally ruled Oman. He has financed the construction or maintenance of a number of mosques, notably the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, as well as the holy places of other religions.

Unlike the heads of other Persian Gulf states, Qaboos bin Sa'id has not publicly named an heir. Article 6 of the Constitution says the royal family should choose a new sultan within three days of the position falling vacant. If the royal family council fails to agree, a letter containing a name penned by Sultan Qaboos should be opened in the presence of a defense council of military and security officials, supreme court chiefs, and heads of the two quasi-parliamentary advisory assemblies. Analysts see the rules as an elaborate means of Sultan Qaboos securing his choice for successor without stirring the pot by making it public during his lifetime.

Qaboos bin Sa'id has no children and has three sisters; there are other male members of the Omani Royal Family including several paternal uncles and their families. Using primogeniture the successor to Qaboos would appear to be the children of his late uncle, His Royal Highness Sayyid Tariq bin Taimur Al Said, Oman's first prime minister before Sultan Qaboos took over the position himself. Oman watchers believe the top contenders to succeed Qaboos are three of Tariq's sons: Assad bin Tariq Al Said, the personal representative of the Sultan; Shihab bin Tariq, a retired naval commander; and Haytham bin Tariq, the Minister of Heritage and National Culture. First Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmud al-Said, a distant cousin of the Sultan, and Taimur bin Assad, the son of Assad bin Taimur, are also mentioned as potential candidates.

Qaboos bin Said is an **avid fan and promoter of classical music**. His 120-member orchestra has a high reputation in the Middle East. The orchestra consists entirely of young Omanis who, since 1986, audition as children and grow up as members of the symphonic ensemble. They play locally and travel abroad with the sultan. Argentine composer Lalo Schifrin was commissioned to compose a work entitled Symphonic Impressions of Oman and the Sultan is particularly enthusiastic about the pipe organ. The **Sultan's birthday, 18 November, is celebrated as Oman's national holiday**. The first day of his reign, 23 July, is celebrated as **Renaissance Day**.

In 1976 Qaboos bin Said married his cousin, Kamila, née Sayyidah Nawwal bint Tariq (born 1951), daughter of HH Sayyid Tariq ibn Taymur. The marriage ended shortly in divorce and the Sultan has been unmarried ever since.

Sultan Qaboos, Oman's absolute ruler, is a man of culture. He plays the organ and the lute, composes music and has his own highly regarded symphony orchestra. The vulgarity of Dubai and the brutality of Iran are simply not his style. He is also a long-standing friend of the west, and of Britain in particular. In his younger days he served in the British army and later donated sports pavilions bearing his name to his old college, Sandhurst, and the RAF officers' college, Cranwell.

With a tiny population (no more than 3 million) and reasonable amounts of oil, Oman is – or has been until recently – a fairly prosperous place. All this results in Oman and its sultan generally getting a sympathetic press. "I have never encountered a place in the Arab world so well-governed as Oman, and in such a quiet and understated way," Robert Kaplan wrote the other day in an article for Foreign Policy headed "Oman's renaissance man".

Last weekend, though, overshadowed by events in Libya, there were disturbances in Sohar (Oman's second city) along with more peaceful demonstrations elsewhere in the country. Protesters' complaints were the familiar ones heard these days in most of the Arab countries: government corruption, cronyism and youth unemployment. Oman has an exceptionally **young population** – 43% are under the age of 15 – and even those who buy the line that Oman is well governed recognise that the authorities face an uphill struggle in providing jobs. "The problem is evolving faster than they can provide solutions," one person who is familiar with the country (and asked not to be identified) told me this week.

But there's another problem too. Even if Qaboos is a Britain-friendly, music-loving ruler with benevolent intentions he is none the less a despot. He **doesn't tolerate criticism and his citizens have very few rights**. They can't, for instance, hold a public meeting without the government's approval. Anyone who wants to set up a non-governmental organisation of any kind needs a licence. To get it, they have to demonstrate that the organisation is "for legitimate objectives" and not "inimical to the social order". On average, that takes two years – assuming permission is granted at all.

Here are a few other things, not from the sultan's harshest critics but from his friends in Washington, courtesy of the state department's latest human rights report:

- The law prohibits criticism of the sultan in any form or medium.
- The law does not provide citizens with the right to change their government.
- The sultan retains ultimate authority on all foreign and domestic issues.
- Public officials are not subject to financial disclosure laws.
- Police do not need search warrants in order to enter people's homes.

- Libel laws and concerns for national security have been used to suppress criticism of government figures and politically objectionable views.
- Publication of books is limited and the government restricts their importation and distribution, as with other media products.

And here are some more, from Reporters Without Borders: • The state decides who can or cannot be a journalist and this permission can be withdrawn at any time

- Censorship and self-censorship are a constant factor.
- Access to news and information can be problematic: journalists have to be content with news compiled by the official news agency on some issues
- Through a decree by the sultan, the government has now extended its control over the media to blogs and other websites.

Merely mentioning the existence of such restrictions can land you in trouble. Two years ago, a web publisher was fined and given a suspended jail sentence for revealing that a supposedly live TV programme was actually pre-recorded in order to eliminate any criticisms of the government.

Because of this, it is very difficult to judge what Omanis really think of their sultan. His supporters tend to express their devotion in exaggeratedly fulsome terms: "His Majesty – gift of God to residents of Oman", "We salute His Majesty's wise leadership" and "I would be willing to lay out my life on the line for him". Of course, there were people saying similar things about President Ben Ali in Tunisia until just a few days before he fled and in Libya we have Muammar Gaddafi's own word that all his people love him.

Meanwhile, those who are more critical of Qaboos have been nervous about sticking their necks out – though possibly, encouraged by events in other parts of the region, they are now losing that fear. Faced with so many restrictions, Omanis have sometimes resorted to unconventional methods for expressing their views. Writing about Gulf rulers in 2001, Dale Eickelman observed: "Only in Oman has the occasional donkey ... been used as a mobile billboard to express anti-regime sentiments. There is no way in which police can maintain dignity in seizing and destroying a donkey on whose flank a political message has been inscribed." In a way, Robert Kaplan is right about Sultan Qaboos being a "renaissance man". He is a despot with class, and his true place is in the 15th century with the Medicis and the Borgias, not 2011.

Omanis

The present-day land of Oman was home to a fairly advanced civilization as far back as about 5000 bc. From 3000 bc until ad 1500, the Omanis were a prosperous, sea-faring, export-oriented people. During the sixth to seventh centuries ad, Islam was brought to Oman by the Arabs. During the 1500s, the Portuguese invaded and built forts in the coastal towns to control the Arabian (or Persian) Gulf trade route. The Portuguese occupied the area for about 100 years until the Omanis drove them out. Oman had trade agreements and dealings with other European nations during the 300 years that followed.

For the most part, Oman has not been under foreign rule since the Portuguese were driven out in the 1600s. During the early to mid-nineteenth century, Oman became an important commercial center for the Persian Gulf area, and relations with other countries were developed. In the 1860s, the invention of the steamship and the opening of the Suez Canal eliminated the demand for Omani sailing ships and the need to stop at Omani ports. Oman entered a time of economic hardship, which lasted until oil production began in 1970. Until 1970, Oman also had been kept completely isolated by a succession of rigidly fundamentalist rulers. In 1970, Sultan Said bin Tamir was forced into exile by his son, Qaboos, who then became sultan. Sultan Qaboos began the production of oil and used the profits to make much-needed improvements in the country. Sultan Qaboos has brought electricity and running water, free modern education and health care, and great improvements in housing and roadways to Omanis.

The population of Oman is over two million. Approximately three-quarters are Omanis. The capital is Muscat, located on the northeast coast. All Omanis are Arabs. Oman is located on the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula. The total area of Oman is slightly smaller than the state of Kansas. Its landscape includes a fertile coastal plain, mountains, and vast expanses of desert. Parts of Oman receive monsoon rains during the summer months. Rain also falls in the mountains. The rest of the country receives little or no rain, making water a very valuable commodity. An ancient water-management system dating back 2,500 years still operates, carrying water from the mountains down into the dry plains below. Oman is known for its extreme heat and humidity. Summer temperatures can rise as high as 110° F (43° C) in the shade, and humidity reaches a drenching 96 percent.

Omanis speak Arabic. A few pockets of other languages exist as well. English is taught as a second language to all students beginning in primary school. Arabic, spoken by 100 million people worldwide, has many distinct dialects. Consequently, people living as few as 300 miles (about 500 kilometers) apart may not be able to understand one another. The written form of Arabic is the same for all literate Arabs (those able to read and write), regardless of how different their spoken dialects are. Arabic is written from right to left.

"Hello" in Arabic is *marhaba* or *ahlan*, to which one replies, *marhabtayn* or *ahlayn*. Other common greetings are *As-salam alaykum* (Peace be with you), with the reply of *Wa alaykum as-salam* (and to you peace). *Ma'assalama* means "Goodbye." "Thank you" is *Shukran*, and "You're welcome" is *Afwan*. "Yes" is *na'am* and "no" is *la'a*. The numbers one to ten in Arabic are *wahad*, *ithnayn*, *thalatha*, *arba'a*, *khamisa*, *sitta*, *saba'a*, *thamanya*, *tisa'a*, and *ashara*.

Arabs' names consist of their first name, their father's name, and their paternal grandfather's name. Women do not take their husband's name when they marry. They keep their father's family name as a sign of respect for their family of origin. First names usually indicate an Arab's religious affiliation. Muslims use names with Islamic religious significance, such as *Muhammad* and *Fatima*, while Christians often use Western names, as well as Arabic Christian names, such as *Elias* and *Butrus*.

Folktales include the legends of Sinbad the Sailor. There is also a legend that King Solomon of Israel flew to Oman on a magic carpet with his *jinn* (a spirit who can take on human or other animal form). He then built 10,000 channels for the ancient water-carrying system in ten days. The original inhabitants of Oman were pantheists, worshiping various goddesses and gods. Many later converted to Christianity. When the Islamic revolution swept through in the seventh century ad, Omanis were among the first to adopt the new religion. All Omanis are Muslim, most belonging to the Ibadi sect. Ibadis are traditionalists who believe in maintaining the original purity of Islam as conceived by the Prophet Muhammad.

The Islamic religion has five so-called "pillars": (1) Muslims must pray five times a day; (2) Muslims must give alms, or *zakat*, to the poor; (3) Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk during the holy month of Ramadan; (4) Muslims must make the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, to Mecca (the spiritual center of Islam, located in Saudi Arabia); and (5) each Muslim must recite the *shahada*, which in English means, "I witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah." Arabs say all their prayers facing in the direction of Mecca.

Islam is a simple, straightforward faith with clear rules for correct living. It is a total way of life, inseparable from the rest of one's daily concerns. Therefore, there is no such thing as the "separation of church and state" in Islamic countries such as Oman. The one secular holiday in Oman is National Day on November 18. Otherwise, all the holidays are Muslim ones. Muslim holidays follow the lunar calendar, so their dates on the standard Western (Gregorian) calendar move back by eleven days each Western year. The main Muslim holidays are *Eid al-Fitr*, a three-day festival at the

end of Ramadan; *Eid al-Adha*, a three-day feast of sacrifice at the end of the month of pilgrimage to Mecca; the *First of Muharram*, or the Muslim New Year; *al-Mawlid An-Nabawi*, the prophet Muhammad's birthday; and *Eid al-Isra wa Al-Miraj*, a feast celebrating Muhammad's nocturnal visit to heaven. Friday is the Islamic day of rest, so most businesses and services are closed.

Omani boys are circumcised at either fifteen days or six years of age. In the past, circumcision was performed at the age of fifteen years in a ceremony involving both women and men. Births are an occasion for celebration, particularly if the child is a boy. Weddings are perhaps the most elaborately celebrated occasions, with great feasts and dancing.

Arab hospitality reigns in Oman. When talking, Arabs touch each other much more often, and stand much closer together, than Westerners do. People of the same sex will often hold hands while talking or walking. (In earlier days, members of the opposite sex, even married couples, never touched in public. This is changing today.) Arabs talk a great deal, talk loudly, repeat themselves often, and interrupt each other constantly. Conversations are highly emotional and full of gestures.

Before Sultan Qaboos took over in 1970, conditions in Oman were extremely primitive. There was no electricity or running water. Houses were built of either mud brick or woven and knotted palm fronds. There were almost no paved roads, and the only means of transportation were camels and donkeys. There were no newspapers and no television or radio stations. Since 1970, Sultan Qaboos has introduced electricity and running water to most of the country, built many new structures of cement block, constructed extensive paved roads, and modernized communications, health care, and education, all of which are provided free of charge. Most Omanis now own cars and trucks. The distance from the capital city of Muscat in the northeast to the city of Salalah at the other end of the country can now be crossed in one day. It used to take two weeks by camel caravan.

Omanis are a tribal people, and the family is the center of their life. Marriages are traditionally arranged by parents, with first cousins being the preferred match. The groom pays the bride a dowry (marriage gift of goods or money), or *mahr*, which becomes her property no matter what happens. Polygyny (more than one wife) is legal, but it is very rarely practiced. Divorce is rare. Girls can be betrothed (engaged) as young as eleven or twelve years of age.

An Omani woman's role is domestic, while the man's is public. Men take care of all business and public transactions, even doing most of the food shopping. Women take care of the home, doing all the cooking, cleaning, and child care. Women and children do most of the sheep, goat, and poultry herding. On farms, women do most of the work in the fields. Weaving and embroidery are also women's tasks. Although Oman is one of the most traditional Islamic countries, women are actually much less restricted in Oman than are women in other Arab nations. Omani women are the only women on the Arabian Peninsula who are allowed to vote.

Omani men wear the traditional *dishdasha*, an ankle-length robe, usually white. Sometimes they wear a *bisht*, a kind of cloak, over their *dishdasha*. On their heads they wear a skullcap or a turban. Many Omani men carry a camel stick—a length of bamboo with a curved handle, like a cane. Almost all Omani men wear a curved dagger called a *khanjar* through their belt. Women in Oman wear very colorful dresses over loose-fitting pants that are gathered tightly at the ankles. They wear scarves on their heads, and a lot of jewelry. In public, most Omani women wear a black ankle-length robe called an *abaya*, and many veil their faces. All Omanis wear leather sandals on their feet.

Staple foods in Oman consist of rice, dates, fruit, fish, and meat. Most meat is cooked in a *tanour*, a hole in the ground where a fire is built and then allowed to burn down to ashes. Meat is wrapped and cooked for twenty-four hours before eating. Omanis eat their meals on the floor or ground, the dishes spread on a cloth. Food and drink are always taken with the right hand. The main meal of the day is at noon; breakfast and supper are light meals. A favorite dessert is *halawa* (halvah), a sweet, flaky treat usually made of crushed sesame seeds and honey. Coffee is drunk strong and black, sometimes flavored with cardamom. *Bedu* (or Bedouin) nomads eat the locusts that swarm over farmers' crops.

Before Sultan Qaboos took over in 1970, there were only three schools in Oman, with a total of 900 students, all boys. Today there are over 1,000 schools, with a total enrollment of 482,000 students, almost half girls. Girls and boys go to separate schools, but their education is similar. Education is free to all Omanis from the preschool through postgraduate levels. Children's education goes through primary, preparatory, and secondary stages. Some students attend college or technical training institutes after secondary school. The Sultan Qaboos University was opened for classes in September 1986. Sixty-five percent of its students are female. The literacy rate (ability to read and write) in 1995 was determined to be about 59 percent for Omanis over fifteen years of age. Hundreds of adult-education and literacy centers have been established to help eliminate illiteracy.

Recipe - Halvah Shortbread

Ingredients

½ cup butter, softened
½ cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
pinch of salt
1¼ cups brown sugar
2 cups unbleached pastry flour
½ cup toasted pecans or walnuts, chopped or ground
a few pecan or walnut halves

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Cream the butter with the tahini, using a food processor or electric mixer, or by hand. Add the salt and brown sugar, and blend until smooth.

Sprinkle in the flour, blending well. Mix in the chopped or ground nuts. The dough will be very stiff.

Lightly butter two 7-inch pie plates or shallow baking pans. Press the dough to evenly cover the bottom of the pie plates to a thickness of no more than 1 inch. Press a few nut halves into the surface to decorate.

Bake for 15 minutes. Check the short-bread frequently, and remove it from the oven as soon as the edges are golden-brown.

While it is still warm, cut each short-bread into 8 or 10 wedges in the pan (if you wait until it is cool to cut it, it will crumble).

Adapted from Moosewood Collective, *Sunday at the Moosewood Restaurant*, New York: Fireside Books, Simon & Schuster, 1990, pp. 84–85.

The Ministry of National Heritage and Culture was established in 1976. It has restored many historic buildings, including forts, castles, and ancient houses. The Ministry has also built numerous historical museums, libraries, and cultural centers, and organized excavations of ancient remains. Excavations have uncovered pottery jars, beads, and arrowheads dating back to the third millennium bc.

Music is not encouraged by the Ibadi sect of Islam. Yet some folk music has developed in Oman. The Oman Center for Traditional Music was founded in August 1983 to collect and document Omani folk music. Folk music is played on traditional instruments such as drums, a trumpet made out of horn, a straight pipe, and the *rebaba*, a stringed instrument. *Sea chanteys* (sailors' songs) have been sung throughout the sea-faring Omanis' history. In 1985, Sultan Qaboos established the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, as well as a music-training school that is attended by both sexes.

Visual arts in Oman are mostly confined to everyday objects, such as kitchen utensils, rugs, ceramic pots, and clothing.

In the fertile areas of Oman, most people are farmers. About 10 percent of Omanis are fishers in the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. Boatbuilding is an ancient craft passed down from generation to generation. Traditionally, boats were built from palm fronds, and larger ones from wood. These

traditional boats are still used, although recently many fishers have purchased aluminum boats. Sails and oars used to be the means of propulsion; most boats now have motors.

Omani nomads herd sheep, goats, and camels. Oman is the camel-breeding capital of the world. Although most of Oman's revenue currently comes from oil, that industry employs only a few thousand Omanis. Roughly two-thirds of laborers in the work force are currently foreign workers. Since 1970, Sultan Qaboos has increased the scope of sporting activities in the country. Sports complexes and sports clubs have been built throughout Oman. The traditional sport of camel racing is very popular, as is horse racing. Hockey was introduced into Oman from India in the nineteenth century and is very popular. Many Omanis enjoy target shooting, and some have won regional or international shooting competitions. Omani national teams have also competed in the Olympic games.

Omanis enjoy plays and concerts performed by the national Youth Theater, established in 1980. Boys have joined Boy Scout groups since 1948; girls have been able to be Girl Scouts since 1970. The National Organization for Scouts and Guides, established in 1975, aims to develop in youth a sense of service, self-reliance, responsibility, and public spirit. There are ten Scout camps in the country.

All art in Oman is utilitarian (designed for usefulness rather than beauty) and can therefore be seen as folk art. Silver-, gold-, and coppersmithing are perhaps the most highly developed arts. Weaving, embroidery, and woodcarving also are highly intricate and require great skill. Pottery is also a well-developed utilitarian art. Ecologically, Oman is a very clean country, with stiff fines for littering (or even for having a dirty car). However, there is a great deal of coastal pollution from oil tankers, from the mining of sand to build new roads, and from the dumping of wastes.

The once nearly extinct white oryx, an antelope, has been successfully reintroduced into the wild in Oman. However, several species of sea turtles continue to be endangered by the Omani taste for turtle soup. Groundwater reserves are being rapidly used up, and the dry climate of today cannot provide enough rain to refill them.

Politically, Oman has operated under a traditional sultanate structure, in which family members are given all the positions of authority and decision-making. This system is quickly becoming harmful to Oman's welfare. Many commoners are now much better educated and trained in the skills needed for government posts than members of the ruling family. Since the production of oil began in 1970, the ruling family has kept Oman's citizens quiet by giving them great benefits and financial gifts. In return, citizens have not questioned the way the government is run. But those days are quickly disappearing. Oman has very limited oil reserves and they are likely to run out soon. Government handouts will then have to be severely cut back. Sultan Qaboos is trying to develop non-oil industries, but he has had limited success so far.

Oman officially called the Sultanate of Oman (Arabic: سلطنة عُمان *Salṭanat 'Umān*), is an Arab state in southwest Asia on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It has a strategically important position at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is bordered by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the northwest, Saudi Arabia to the west, and Yemen to the southwest and also shares a marine border with Iran. The coast is formed by the Arabian Sea on the southeast and the Gulf of Oman on the northeast. The Madha and Musandam exclaves are surrounded by the UAE on their land borders, with the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman forming Musandam's coastal boundaries.

From the 17th century, Oman had its own empire, and vied with Portugal and Britain for influence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. At its peak in the 19th century, Omani influence or control extended across the Strait of Hormuz to Iran, and modern day Pakistan, and as far south as Zanzibar. As its power declined in the 20th century, the sultanate came under heavy influence from the United Kingdom, though Oman was never formally part of the British Empire, or a British protectorate. Oman has long-standing military and political ties with the United Kingdom and the United States, although it maintains an independent foreign policy.

Oman is an **absolute monarchy** in which the Sultan of Oman exercises ultimate authority, but its parliament has some legislative and oversight powers. In November 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) listed Oman, from among 135 countries worldwide, as the nation most-improved during the preceding 40 years. According to international indices, Oman is one of the most developed and stable countries in the Arab world.

As with other Arab States of the Persian Gulf, oil is the mainstay of the economy, providing a large proportion of GDP, although compared to its neighbours Oman is a modest producer. Agriculture and fishing are also important sources of income. A diversification drive includes tourism; the policy of Omanisation aims to replace expatriate workers with locals.

Prehistory

At Aybut Al Auwal in the Dhofar region of Oman a site was discovered in 2011 containing more than 100 surface scatters of stone tools belonging to a regionally-specific African lithic industry - the late Nubian Complex - known previously only from the northeast and Horn of Africa. Two optically stimulated luminescence age estimates place the Arabian Nubian Complex at 106,000 years old. This supports the proposition that early human populations moved from Africa into Arabia during the Late Pleistocene.

Dereaze, located in the city of Ibri, is the oldest known human settlement in the area, dating back as many as 8,000 years to the late Stone Age. Archaeological remains have been discovered here from the Stone Age and the Bronze Age; findings have included stone implements, animal bones, shells and fire hearths, with the later dating back to 7615 BC as the oldest signs of human settlement in the area. Other discoveries include hand-molded pottery bearing distinguishing pre-Bronze Age marks, heavy flint implements, pointed tools and scrapers.

On a mountain rock-face in the same district, animal drawings have been discovered. Similar drawings have also been found in the Wadi Sahtan and Wadi Bani Kharus areas of Rustaq, consisting of human figures carrying weapons and being confronted by wild animals. Siwan in Haima is another Stone Age location and some of the archaeologists have found arrowheads, knives, chisels and circular stones which may have been used to hunt animals.

Ancient history

Sumerian tablets refer to a country called Magan or Makan, a name believed to refer to Oman's ancient copper mines. Mazoon, another name used for the region, is derived from the word muzn, which means heavy clouds which carry abundant water. The present-day name of the country, Oman, is believed to originate from the Arab tribes who migrated to its territory from the Uman region of Yemen; many such tribes settled in Oman, making a living by fishing, herding or stock breeding, and many present day Omani families are able to trace their ancestral roots to other parts of Arabia.

From the 6th century BC to the arrival of Islam in the 7th century AD, Oman was controlled and/or influenced by three Persian dynasties, the Achaemenids, Parthians and Sassanids. In the 6th century BC, the Achaemenids exerted a strong degree of control over the Omani peninsula, most likely ruling from a coastal center such as Sohar. By about 250 BC, the Parthian dynasty had brought the Persian Gulf under their control and extended their influence as far as Oman, establishing garrisons in Oman to help control the trade routes in the Persian Gulf. In the 3rd century AD, the Sassanids succeeded the Parthians and held the area until the rise of Islam four centuries later.

Arrival of Islam

Omanis were among the first people to come in contact with and accept Islam.¹ The conversion of the Omanis is usually ascribed to Amr ibn al-As, who was sent by Muhammad around 630 AD to invite Jayfar and 'Abd, the joint rulers of Oman at that time, to accept the faith. In submitting to Islam, Oman became an Ibadhi state, ruled by an elected leader, the Imam.

During the early years of the Islamic mission, Oman played a major role in the Wars of Apostasy that occurred after the death of Muhammad, and also took part in the great Islamic conquests by land and sea in Iraq, Persia and beyond. Oman's most prominent role in this respect was through its extensive trading and seafaring activities in East Africa and the Far East, particularly during the 19th century, when it propagated Islam to many of East Africa's coastal regions, certain areas of Central Africa, India, Southeast Asia and China. After its submission to Islam, Oman was ruled by Umayyads between 661–750, Abbasids between 750–931, 932–933 and 934–967, Qarmatians between 931–932 and 933–934, Buyids between 967–1053, and the Seljuks of Kirman between 1053–1154.

Portuguese colonization

A decade following Vasco de Gama's successful voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and to India in 1497-98, the Portuguese explorers arrived in Oman and occupied Muscat for a 143-year period, between 1507 and 1650, where their fortress still remains. In need of an outpost to protect their sea lanes, the Portuguese built up and fortified the city, where remnants of their colonial architectural style still remain. The Ottoman Navy took over the port of Oman in 1522 during the fight for control over the Persian Gulf.

Rebellious tribes eventually drove out the Portuguese, but they were pushed out themselves about a century later, in 1741, by the leader of a Yemeni tribe leading a massive army from various allied tribes, beginning the current line of ruling sultans. Excepting a brief Persian invasion in the late 1740s, Oman has been self-governing ever since.

No foreign power controlled the entirety of what is now Oman. The majority of the territory was always ruled by tribes, with colonial control contained to a few strategic port cities. Oman, as it exists now was never under the total sway of European colonization.

18th and 19th century

In the 1690s, Saif bin Sultan, the Imam of Oman, pressed down the East African coast. A major obstacle to his progress was Fort Jesus, housing the garrison of a Portuguese settlement at Mombasa. After a two-year siege, the fort fell to bin Sultan in 1698. Thereafter the Omanis easily ejected the Portuguese from Zanzibar and from all other coastal regions north of Mozambique, with the aid of the Somali Ajuuraan State. The Persians invaded Oman in 1737. They were driven out in 1749 when the Al Said dynasty came to power. They continue to rule to this day.

Zanzibar was a valuable property as the main slave market of the East African coast, and became an increasingly important part of the Omani empire, a fact reflected by the decision of the 19th century Sultan of Oman, Sa'id ibn Sultan, to make it his main place of residence in 1837. Sa'id built impressive palaces and gardens in Zanzibar. Rivalry between his two sons was resolved, with the help of forceful British diplomacy, when one of them, Majid, succeeded to Zanzibar and to the many regions claimed by the family on the East African coast. The other son, Thuwaini, inherited Muscat and Oman.

A History of Omani presence is also known in Comoros archipelago in the Indian ocean, which led to influences in Comorian culture from the clothing, to the wedding ceremonies.

In 1783, Oman's Saiad Sultan, defeated ruler of Muscat, was granted sovereignty over Gwadar, a coastal city located in the Makran region of what is now the far southwestern corner of Pakistan, near the present-day border of Iran and at the mouth of the Gulf of Oman. After regaining control of Muscat, this sovereignty was continued (via an appointed wali, "governor") and close relations were maintained with the Emirs of Sindh. Another point of view is that in the middle of the 18th century, Mir Nasir Khan captured Gwadar and its surrounding areas after defeating the Gichkis tribes and included it in the Kalat Khanate. However, realizing that maintaining control of the area will be difficult without the support of the Gichkis, Mir Nasir entered into an agreement with the local Gichki Chief, which allowed the Gichkis to maintain administrative control of the area, in return for furnishing half the collected revenues to Kalat, this arrangement continued till 1783. When Saiad Sultan fell out with his brother, the ruler of Muscat, and asked for help, Mir Nasir Khan handed over Gwadar, as part of his share of revenues, to Saiad Sultan for his maintenance with the understanding that the area be returned to Kalat, when Saiad Sultan acquires the throne. Saiad Sultan ascended to the throne of Muscat in 1797 but never returned Gwadar enclave to Kalat. The ensuing struggle between the heirs of the Sultan and Khan of Kalat, for possession of Gwadar, allowed the British to intervene. The British after extracting concessions from the Sultan for the use of the area facilitated Muscat to retain Gwadar. Later on, the British tried to twist the history by claiming that the area was permanently gifted to the Sultan by Mir Nasir, however, local accounts and the declassified documents of that time refute this claim.^[19]

The Hajar Mountains, of which the Jebel Akhdar is a part, separate the country into two distinct regions: the interior, known as Oman, and the coastal area dominated by the capital, Muscat. In 1913, control of the country split. The interior was ruled by Ibadite imams and the coastal areas by the sultan. Under the terms of the British-brokered Treaty of Seeb of 1920, the sultan recognised the autonomy of the interior. The Sultan of Muscat would be responsible for the external affairs of Oman.

Reign of Sultan Said

The rule of Sultan Said bin Taimur was characterised by a feudal and isolationist approach. Imam Ghalib Bin Ali was the elected Imam of the Imamate of Oman in May 1954. Relations between the Sultan of Muscat, Said bin Taimur, and Imam Ghalib were ruptured over a dispute concerning the right to grant oil concessions. A subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company was intensely interested in some promising geological formations near

Fahud. Under the terms of the 1920 treaty of Seeb, the Sultan claimed all dealings with the oil company as his prerogative. The Imam, on the other hand, claimed that since the oil was in his territory, anything dealing with it was an internal matter.

In December 1955, Sultan Said bin Taimur sent troops of the Muscat and Oman Field Force to occupy the main centres in Oman, including Nizwa, the capital of the Imamate of Oman, and Ibri. Imam Ghalib bin Ali along with his younger brother Talib bin Ali Al Hinai, led the Imamate of Oman in the Jebel Akhdar War against Sultan Said bin Taimur's attack on his lands. In July 1957, the Sultan's forces were withdrawing, but they were repeatedly ambushed, sustaining heavy casualties. Sultan Said bin Taimur, however, with the intervention of infantry (two companies of the Cameronians) and armoured car detachments from the British Army and aircraft of the RAF was able to suppress the rebellion. Talib's forces retreated to the inaccessible Jebel Akhdar.

Colonel David Smiley, who had been seconded to organize the Sultan's Armed Forces, managed to isolate the mountain in autumn 1958 and found a route to the plateau from Wadi Bani Kharu. On 27 January 1959, they occupied the mountain in a surprise operation. Ghalib, Talib and Sulaiman managed to escape to Saudi Arabia, where the imam's cause was promoted until the 1970s. The Treaty of Seeb was terminated and the autonomous Imamate of Oman abolished giving way to the present day Sultanate.

In 1955, Makran acceded to Pakistan and was made a district – although Gwadar, at the time, was not included in Makran. On 8 September 1958, Pakistan purchased the Gwadar enclave from Oman for \$3 million. Gwadar then became a tehsil in the Makran district.

Oil reserves were discovered in 1964 and extraction began in 1967. In the Dhofar Rebellion, which began in 1965, leftist forces were pitted against government troops. As the rebellion threatened to overthrow the Sultan's rule in Dhofar, Sultan Said bin Taimur was deposed in a bloodless coup (1970) by his son Qaboos bin Said, who expanded Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces, modernised the state's administration and introduced social reforms. The uprising was finally put down in 1975 with the help of forces from Iran, Jordan, Pakistan and the British Royal Air Force and Special Air Service.

Reign of Sultan Qaboos

After deposing his father in 1970, Sultan Qaboos opened up the country, embarked on economic reforms and followed a policy of modernisation by spending on health, education and welfare. In 1981 Oman became a founding member of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council.

It was some time before political reforms were introduced. Historically, voters had been chosen from among tribal leaders, intellectuals and businessmen. However, in 1997 Sultan Qaboos decreed that women could vote for, and stand for election to, the Majlis al-Shura, the Consultative Assembly of Oman. Two women were duly elected to the body.

In 2002, voting rights were extended to all citizens over the age of 21. The first elections to the Consultative Assembly in which all citizens over the age of 21 could vote, were held in 2003. In 2004, the Sultan appointed Oman's first female minister with portfolio.

There was, however, little change to the actual political make-up of the government and the Sultan continued to rule by decree. Nearly 100 suspected Islamists were arrested in 2005 and 31 people were convicted of trying to overthrow the government. They were, however, pardoned in June.

Unrest has been inspired by the Arab Spring groundswell of political dissent in the region. Protests began in January 2011, with protestors demanding political reforms and jobs. They were dispersed by riot police in February 2011. Sultan Qaboos reacted by promising jobs and benefits. In October 2011, elections were held to the Consultative Assembly, for which Sultan Qaboos promised greater powers. The following year, the government began a crackdown on Internet criticism. In September 2012, trials began of 'activists' accused of posting "abusive and provocative" criticism of the government online. Six were given jail terms of 12–18 months and fines of around \$2,500 each.

Geography

A vast gravel desert plain covers most of central Oman, with mountain ranges along the north (Al Hajar Mountains) and southeast coast, where the country's main cities are also located: the capital city Muscat, Sohar and Sur in the north, and Salalah in the south. Oman's climate is hot and dry in the interior and humid along the coast. During past epochs Oman was covered by ocean, witnessed by the large numbers of fossilized shells existing in areas of the desert away from the modern coastline.

The peninsula of Musandam (Musandem) exclave, which has a strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz, is separated from the rest of Oman by the United Arab Emirates. The series of small towns known collectively as Dibba are the gateway to the Musandam peninsula on land and the fishing villages of Musandam by sea, with boats available for hire at Khasab for trips into the Musandam peninsula by sea.

Oman's other exclave, inside UAE territory, known as Madha, located halfway between the Musandam Peninsula and the main body of Oman, is part of the Musandam governorate, covering approximately 75 km² (29 sq mi). Madha's boundary was settled in 1969, with the north-east corner of Madha barely 10 m (32.8 ft) from the Fujairah road. Within the Madha exclave is a UAE enclave called Nahwa, belonging to the Emirate of Sharjah, situated about 8 km (5 mi) along a dirt track west of the town of New Madha, consisting of about forty houses with a clinic and telephone exchange. The central desert of Oman is an important source of meteorites for scientific analysis.

Climate

Oman has a hot climate and very little rainfall. Annual rainfall in Muscat averages 100 mm (3.9 in), falling mostly in January. The Dhofar Mountains area receives seasonal rainfall (from late June to late September) as a result of the monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean saturated with cool moisture and heavy fog. The mountain areas receive more plentiful rainfall, and annual rainfall on the higher parts of the Jabal Akhdar probably exceeds 400 mm (15.7 in). Some parts of the coast, particularly near the island of Masirah, sometimes receive no rain at all within the course of a year. The climate generally is very hot, with temperatures reaching around 50 °C (122.0 °F) (peak) in the hot season, from May to September.

Flora and fauna

Desert shrub and desert grass, common to southern Arabia, are found, but vegetation is sparse in the interior plateau, which is largely gravel desert. The greater monsoon rainfall in Dhofar and the mountains makes the growth there more luxuriant during summer; coconut palms grow plentifully in the coastal plains of Dhofar and frankincense is produced in the hills, with abundant oleander and varieties of acacia. The Al Hajar Mountains are a distinct ecoregion, the highest points in eastern Arabia with wildlife including the Arabian tahr.

Indigenous mammals include the leopard, hyena, fox, wolf, hare, oryx, and ibex. Birds include the vulture, eagle, stork, bustard, Arabian partridge, bee eater, falcon, and sunbird. In 2001, Oman had nine endangered species of mammals and five endangered types of birds¹ and nineteen threatened plant species. Decrees have been passed to protect endangered species, including the Arabian leopard, Arabian Oryx, Mountain gazelle, Goitered Gazelle, Arabian tahr, Green sea turtle, Hawksbill Turtle and Olive ridley turtle. However, the Oman Arabian Oryx sanctuary is the first site ever to be deleted from UNESCO's World Heritage List due to the government's decision to reduce the site to 10% of its former size so that the remainder could be opened to oil prospectors.

Environment

Drought and limited rainfall contribute to shortages in the nation's water supply, so maintaining an adequate supply of water for agricultural and domestic use is one of Oman's most pressing environmental problems, with limited renewable water resources; 94% of available water is used in farming and 2% for industrial activity, with the majority sourced from fossil water in the desert areas and spring water in hills and mountains. Drinking water is available throughout the country, either piped or delivered.

The soil in coastal plains, such as Salalah, have shown increased levels of salinity, due to over exploitation of ground water and encroachment by seawater in the water table. Pollution of beaches and other coastal areas by oil tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman is also a persistent risk.

Politics

Oman is an absolute monarchy in which all legislative, executive, and judiciary power ultimately rests in the hands of the hereditary sultan, and in which the system of laws is based firmly on Islamic sharia. Freedom House has routinely rated the country "Not Free".

The Omani legislature is the bicameral Council of Oman, consisting of an upper chamber, the Council of State (Majlis ad-Dawlah) and a lower chamber, the Consultative Council (Majlis ash-Shoura). Political parties are banned. The upper chamber has 71 members, appointed by the Sultan from among prominent Omanis; it has only advisory powers. The 84 members of the Consultative Council are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms, but the Sultan makes the final selections and can negotiate the election results. The members are appointed for three-year terms, which may be renewed once. The last elections were held on 15 October 2011.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said is the de facto prime minister and also controls the foreign affairs and defence portfolios. The sultan has absolute power and issues laws by decree. He is the longest-serving ruler in the Middle East.

Legal system

The judiciary branch is subordinate to the sultan and the Ministry of Justice. Sharia (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation, and Sharia Court Departments within the civil court system are responsible for family-law matters, such as divorce and inheritance. In some rural areas, tribal laws and customs are frequently used to settle disputes.

The Basic Statute of the State is the cornerstone of the Omani legal system and it operates as a constitution for the country. The Basic Statute was issued in the year 1996 and thus far has only been amended once, in 2011, as a response to protests.

The administration of justice is highly personalised, with limited due process protections, especially in political and security-related cases. A 2012 report by Bertelsmann Stiftung declared that while "Oman's legal code theoretically protects civil liberties and personal freedoms, both are regularly ignored by the regime. Oman, therefore, cannot be considered free."

Foreign policy

Since 1970, Oman has pursued a moderate foreign policy and expanded its diplomatic relations dramatically. Oman is among the very few Arab countries that have maintained friendly ties with Iran. WikiLeaks disclosed US diplomatic cables which say that Oman helped free British sailors captured by Iran's navy in 2007. The same cables also portray the Omani government as wishing to maintain cordial relations with Iran and as having continuously turned down US diplomats requesting Oman to take a sterner stance against Iran.

Military

Oman's military manpower totalled 44,100 in 2006, including 25,000 men in the army, 4,200 sailors in the navy, and an air force with 4,100 personnel. The Royal Household maintained 5,000 Guards, 1,000 in Special Forces, 150 sailors in the Royal Yacht fleet, and 250 pilots and ground personnel in the Royal Flight squadrons. Oman also maintains a modest-sized paramilitary force of 4,400 men.

The Royal Army of Oman had 25,000 active personnel in 2006, plus a small contingent of Royal Household troops. Despite a comparative large military spending, it has been relatively slow to modernize its forces. Oman has a relatively limited number of tanks, including 6 M60A1, 73 M60A3, and 38 Challenger 2 main battle tanks, as well as 37 ageing Scorpion light tanks.

The Royal Air Force of Oman has approximately 4,100 men, with only 36 combat aircraft and no armed helicopters. Combat aircraft include 20 ageing Jaguars, 12 Hawk Mk 203s, 4 Hawk Mk 103s, and 12 PC-9 turboprop trainers with a limited combat capability. It has one squadron of 12 F-16C/D aircraft. Oman also has 4 A202-18 Bravos, and 8 MFI-17B Mushshaqs.

The Royal Navy of Oman had 4,200 men in 2000, and is headquartered at Seeb. It has bases at Ahwi, Ghanam Island, Mussandam and Salalah. In 2006, Oman had 10 surface combat vessels. These included two 1,450-ton Qahir class corvettes, and 8 ocean-going patrol boats. The Omani Navy had one 2,500-ton Nasr al Bahr class LSL (240 troops, 7 tanks) with a helicopter deck. Oman also had at least four landing craft. Oman ordered three Khareef-class corvettes from the VT Group for £400 million in 2007. They are being built at Portsmouth.

In 2010 Oman spent US\$4.074 billion on military expenditures, 8.5% of the gross domestic product. The sultanate has a long history of association with the British military and defence industry.

Administrative divisions

The Sultanate is administratively divided into eleven governorates. Governorates are, in turn, divided into 60 wilayats.

Economy

Oman's Basic Statute of the State expresses in Article 11 that the "national economy is based on justice and the principles of a free economy."

Omani citizens enjoy good living standards, but the future is uncertain with Oman's limited oil reserves. Other sources of income, agriculture and industry, are small in comparison and count for less than 1% of the country's exports, but diversification is seen as a priority in the government of Oman. Agriculture, often subsistence in its character, produces dates, limes, grains and vegetables, but with less than 1% of the country under cultivation Oman is likely to remain a net importer of food.

Since the slump in oil prices in 1998, Oman has made active plans to diversify its economy and is placing a greater emphasis on other areas of industry, such as tourism. Metkore Alloys is due to build a world-class 1,650,000-tonnes-per-annum capacity ferro-chrome smelter in Oman with an envisaged investment of \$80 million.

A free-trade agreement with the United States took effect 1 January 2009, eliminating tariff barriers on all consumer and industrial products, also providing strong protections for foreign businesses investing in Oman. Tourism, another source of Oman's revenue, is on the rise.¹ A popular event is The Khareef Festival held in Salalah, Dhofar, which is 1,200 km from the capital city of Muscat, during the monsoon season (August) and is similar to Muscat Festival. During this latter event the mountains surrounding Salalah are popular with tourists as a result of the cool weather and lush greenery, rarely found anywhere else in Oman.

Oman's foreign workers send an estimated US\$30 billion annually to their Asian and African home states, more than half of them earning a monthly wage of less than US\$400. The largest foreign community is from the south Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka or come from Maharashtra, Gujarat and the Punjab, representing more than half of entire workforce in Oman. Salaries for overseas workers are known to be less than for Omani nationals, though still from two to five times higher than for the equivalent job in India. The Oman Ferries Company maintains the two diesel-powered, high-speed, car ferries – Shinas and Hormouz. The ferries are used for travel between Muscat and Khasab. Khasab is strategically located in Musandam on the southern tip of the Strait of Hormuz and is controlled by Oman. Mainland Oman is separated by a small strip of UAE territory from Musandam.

Oil and gas industries

Oman's proved reserves of petroleum total about 5.5 billion barrels, 24th largest in the world. Oil is extracted and processed by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), with proven oil reserves holding approximately steady, although oil production has been declining. The Ministry of Oil and Gas is responsible for all oil and gas infrastructure and projects in Oman.

Between 2000 and 2007, production fell by more than 26%, from 972,000 to 714,800 barrels per day. Production has recovered to 816,000 barrels in 2009,^[72] and 930,000 barrels per day in 2012. Oman's natural gas reserves are estimated at 849.5 billion cubic meters, ranking 28th in the world, and production in 2008 was about 24 billion cubic meters per year.

Demographics

According to the 2010 census, the total population was 2,773,479 and of those, 1,957,336 were Omanis. The population has grown from 2,340,815 in the 2003 census. The total fertility rate in 2011 was estimate at 3.70. 43% of the population is under the age of 15. About 50% of the population lives in Muscat and the Batinah coastal plain northwest of the capital; about 200,000 live in the Dhofar (southern) region, and about 30,000 live in the remote Musandam Peninsula on the Strait of Hormuz.

The country has a racially mixed population, a legacy of its imperial past. Many Omani people originate from East Africa or Baluchistan. Some 600,000 foreigners live in Oman, most of whom are guest workers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India and the Philippines.

Religion

About 75% of Oman is Muslim. The Oman government does not keep statistics on religious affiliation, but most citizens are Muslims. Around half of the population follows the Ibadi school of Islam, which is distinct from the Sunni and Shia denominations and the only remaining expression of Kharijism, which was created as a result of one of the first schisms within the religion.¹ Historically, Ibadi has been Oman's dominant religious sect, and the Sultan is a member of the Ibadi community.

Non-Muslim religious communities include various groups of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Baha'is, and Christians. Christian communities are centered in the major urban areas of Muscat, Sohar, and Salalah and include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and various Protestant congregations, organizing along linguistic and ethnic lines.

More than 50 different Christian groups, fellowships, and assemblies are active in the Muscat metropolitan area, formed by migrant workers from Southeast Asia, there are also small communities of ethnic Indian Hindus and Christians. Citizenship is granted to immigrants in Oman after a minimum of 5 years of residency or spouses of Omani citizens if applied for.

Languages

Arabic is the official language of Oman. Balochi is widely spoken. Endangered languages in Oman include Bathari, Harsusi, Hobyot, Jibbali, Khojki, Kumzari, Mehri, Zidgali. Oman was the first Persian Gulf state to have German taught as second language.

Although Arabic is Oman's official language, there are native speakers of different dialects, as well as Balochi (the language of the Baloch from Baluchistan western-Pakistan, eastern Iran), and southern Afghanistan or offshoots of Southern Arabian, and some descendants of Sindhi sailors. Also spoken in Oman are Semitic languages only distantly related to Arabic, but closely related to Semitic languages in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Swahili and English are also widely spoken in the country due to the historical relations between Oman and Zanzibar the two languages have been linked historically. The dominant indigenous language is a dialect of Arabic and the country has also adopted Balochi as a second largest language. Almost all signs and writings appear in both Arabic and English. A significant number also speak Urdu, due to the influx of Pakistani migrants during the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Culture

Outwardly, Oman shares many of the cultural characteristics of its Arab neighbours, particularly those in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Despite some superficial similarities, important factors make Oman unique in the Middle East.^[76] These are as much a product of geography and history as of culture and economic change.

The relatively recent and artificial nature of the state in Oman means that it is difficult to describe a national culture. Furthermore, there is sufficient cultural heterogeneity within its national boundaries to consider Oman differently from other Arab States of the Persian Gulf. It is also claimed that Oman's cultural diversity is much greater than that of its Arab neighbours, given its historical expansion to East Africa and the Indian Ocean.

The shipbuilding industry is traditional in Oman, as ships have played a major role in the Omanis' ability to sail to stay in touch with the civilisations of the ancient world. Sur was one of the most famous cities overlooking the Indian Ocean to manufacture ships. The Al Ghanja ship takes one whole year to build. Other types of Omani ship include As Sunbouq and Al Badan.

Dress

The male national dress is the dishdasha, a simple, ankle-length, collarless gown with long sleeves. The colour most frequently worn is white, although a variety of other colours can also be seen. Its main adornment is a tassel (furakha) sewn into the neckline, which can be impregnated with perfume. Underneath the dishdasha, a plain, wide strip of cloth is worn, wrapped around the body from the waist down. The most noted regional differences in dishdasha designs are the style with which they are embroidered, which varies according to age group. On formal occasions, the dishdasha may be covered by a black or beige cloak, called a bisht. The embroidery edging the cloak is often in silver or gold thread and it is intricate in detail.

Two types of head dress are worn by Omani men, the mussar, a square cut piece of woven wool or cotton fabric of a single colour, decorated with various embroidered patterns, and kummah a cap that is the head dress worn during leisure hours. Some men carry the assa, a stick, which can have practical uses or is simply used as an accessory during formal events. Omani men, on the whole, wear sandals on their feet.

The khanjar (dagger) is part of the national dress and men wear the khanjar on all formal public occasions and festivals. It is traditionally worn at the waist. Sheaths may vary from simple covers to ornate silver or gold-decorated pieces. It is a symbol of a man's origin, his manhood and courage. The khanjar is incorporated into the national flag.

Omani women wear eye-catching national costumes, with distinctive regional variations. All costumes incorporate vivid colours and vibrant embroidery and decorations. In the past, the choice of colours was linked to a tribe's tradition. The Omani women's traditional costume comprises several garments: the dishdasha or kandoorah, which is a long tunic whose sleeves or radoon are adorned with hand-stitched embroidery of various designs. The dishdasha is worn over a pair of loose fitting trousers, tight at the ankles, known as a sirwal. Women also wear a head shawl most commonly referred to as the lihaf.

Women reserve wearing their traditional dress for special occasions, and instead now choose to wear a loose black cloak called abaya over their personal choice of clothing, whilst in some regions, particularly amongst the Bedouin, a face mask known as a burqa is still worn to this day. Women wear hijab, and though some women cover their faces and hands, most do not. The Sultan has forbidden the covering of faces in public office.

Popular culture

Music of Oman. In 1985, Sultan Qaboos decided to found the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, a decision attributed to his love for classical music. Instead of engaging foreign musicians, he decided to establish an orchestra made up of Omanis. On 1 July 1987, the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra gave its inaugural concert, at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel's Oman Auditorium. There are over 130 different forms of traditional Omani songs and dances. The Oman Centre for Traditional Music was established in 1984 to preserve them.

The cinema of Oman is very small, there being only one Omani film Al-Boom (2006) as of 2007.

Media

Sultanate of Oman Television began broadcasting for the first time from Muscat on 17 November 1974 and separately from Salalah on 25 November 1975. On 1 June 1979, the two stations at Muscat and Salalah were joined by satellite link to form a unified broadcasting service. Oman TV's

broadcasts are transmitted through a network of stations spread across the country in both populated and remote areas to overcome the natural obstacles created by the mountainous terrain.

Food

The main daily meal is usually eaten at midday, while the evening meal is lighter. During Ramadan, dinner is served after the Taraweeh prayers, sometimes as late as 11 pm. However these dinner timings differ according to each family and when they eat, for instance some families would choose to eat right after maghrib prayers and have dessert after taraweh.

Arsia is a festival meal, served during celebrations, which consists of mashed rice and meat, sometimes chicken instead. Another popular festival meal is shuwa, which is meat cooked very slowly (sometimes for up to 2 days) in an underground clay oven. The meat becomes extremely tender and it is infused with spices and herbs before cooking to give it a very distinct taste. Fish is often used in main dishes too, and the kingfish is a popular ingredient. Mashuai is a meal consisting of a whole spit-roasted kingfish served with lemon rice.

Rukhal bread is a thin, round bread originally baked over a fire made from palm leaves. It is eaten at any meal, typically served with Omani honey for breakfast or crumbled over curry for dinner. Chicken, fish and mutton are regularly used in dishes. The Omani Halwa is a very popular sweet, it is basically cooked raw sugar with nuts. There are many different flavors, the most popular ones being the black halwa (original) and the saffron halwa. Halwa is considered as a symbol of Omani hospitality, and is traditionally served with coffee. As is the case with most Middle Eastern countries, alcohol is only available in some hotels and few restaurants.

Sport

The government aims to give young people a fully rounded education by providing activities and experience in the sporting, cultural, intellectual, social and scientific spheres, and to excel internationally in these areas and for this reason, in October 2004, the government created a Ministry of Sports Affairs to replace the General Organization for youth, sports and cultural affairs. The 2009 Gulf Cup of Nations, the 19th edition, took place in Muscat, from 4 to 17 January 2009 and was won by the Omani national football team. Ali Al-Habsi is an Omani professional association football player. He currently plays in the Premier League as a goalkeeper for Wigan Athletic. The International Olympic Committee awarded the former GOYSCA its prestigious prize for Sporting excellence in recognition of its contributions to youth and sports and its efforts to promote the Olympic spirit and goals.

The Oman Olympic Committee played a major part in organizing the highly successful 2003 Olympic Days, which were of great benefit to the sports associations, clubs and young participants. The football association took part, along with the handball, basketball, rugby union, hockey, volleyball, athletics, swimming, and tennis associations. In 2010, Muscat hosted the 2010 Asian Beach Games.

They also host tennis tournaments in different age divisions each year. Inside the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex stadium contains a 50 meter pool for swimming which is used for international tournaments from different schools in different countries. The Tour of Oman, a professional cycling 6-day stage race, is held in February. Oman also hosted the Asian 2011 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup qualifiers, where 11 teams were competing for 3 spots at the FIFA World Cup. Oman hosted the Men's and Women's 2012 Beach Handball World Championships at the Millennium Resort in Mussanah, from 8 to 13 July.

Oman is perhaps the only Persian Gulf nation to have bullfighting events organised in its territories. Al-Batena area is prominent for such events. Wide audiences turn up to see the events unfold. Omani bullfighting is however not a violent event. The origins of Bullfighting in Oman are unknown though many locals here believe it was brought to Oman by the Moors of Spanish origin. Yet others say it has a direct connection with Portugal which colonized the Omani coastline for nearly two centuries.

Education

The adult literacy rate in 2010 was 86.9%.^[94] Before 1970, only three formal schools existed in the whole country with fewer than 1000 students receiving education in them. Since Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, the government has given high priority to education to develop a domestic work force, which the government considers a vital factor in the country's economic and social progress. Today there are over 1000 state schools and about 650,000 students.

In 1986, Oman's first university, Sultan Qaboos University, opened. University of Nizwa is also one of the fastest growing universities in Oman. Other post-secondary institutions in Oman include Higher College of Technology and its six other colleges of technology, six colleges of applied sciences (including a teacher's training college), a college of banking and financial studies, an institute of Sharia sciences, and several nursing institutes. Some 200 scholarships are awarded each year for study abroad. According to the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, the top-ranking universities in the country are Sultan Qaboos University (1678th worldwide), the Dhofar University (6011th) and the University of Nizwa (6093rd).

Health

Life expectancy at birth in Oman is estimated to be 76.1 years in 2010. As of 2010, there were an estimated 2.1 physicians and 2.1 hospital beds per 1,000 people. In 1993, 89% of the population had access to health care services. In 2000, 99% of the population had access to health care services.¹ During the last three decades, the Oman health care system has demonstrated and reported great achievements in health care services and preventive and curative medicine. In 2001, Oman was ranked number 8 by the World Health Organization.

Frankincense also called *olibanum* (Arabic: **لُبَّانٌ**, *lubbān*; Chinese: 乳香 *Ru Xiang*; Somali: *luubaan*; Hindi: **एवम** *Dhoop*; Hebrew: **לְבוֹנָה**, *levonah*), is an aromatic resin obtained from trees of the genus *Boswellia*, particularly *Boswellia sacra*, *B. carteri*, *B. thurifera*, *B. frereana* and *B. bhaw-dajiana* (Burseraceae). The English word is derived from old French "franc encens" (i.e. high quality incense) and is used in incense and perfumes.



There are four main species of *Boswellia* that produce true frankincense and resin from each of the four is available in various grades. The grades depend on the time of harvesting. The resin is hand-sorted for quality. Frankincense can also be found in the Christian Bible as one of the three gifts the wise men gave to baby Jesus. Flowers and branches of the *Boswellia sacra* tree, the species from which most frankincense is derived



Frankincense is tapped from the scraggly but hardy trees by slashing the bark, which is called striping, and allowing the exuded resin to bleed out and harden. These hardened resins are called tears. The aroma from these tears are more valuable for their presumed healing abilities and are also said to have superior qualities for religious ritual.

There are several species and varieties of frankincense trees, each producing a slightly different type of resin. Differences in soil and climate create even more diversity of the resin, even within the same species. *Boswellia Sacra* trees are considered unusual for their ability to grow in environments so unforgiving that they sometimes grow out of solid rock. The initial means of attachment to the rock is unknown but is accomplished by a bulbous disk-like swelling of the trunk. This growth prevents it from being ripped from the rock during violent storms that frequent this region. This feature is slight or absent in trees grown in rocky soil or gravel. The trees start producing resin when they are about eight to 10 years old. Tapping is done two to three times a year with the final taps producing the best tears due to their higher aromatic terpene, sesquiterpene and diterpene content. Generally speaking, the more opaque resins are the best quality. Fine resin is produced in Yemen and along the northern coast of Somalia, from which the Roman Catholic Church draws its supplies.



Recent studies have indicated that frankincense tree populations are declining, partly due to over-exploitation. Heavily tapped trees produce seeds that germinate at only 16% while seeds of trees that had not been tapped germinate at more than 80%. In addition, burning, grazing, and attacks by the longhorn beetle have reduced the tree population. Conversion (clearing) of frankincense woodlands to agriculture is also a major threat.

Indirect burning of frankincense on a hot coal. Frankincense has been traded on the Arabian Peninsula and in North Africa for more than 5000 years. A mural depicting sacks of frankincense traded from the Land of Punt adorns the walls of the temple of ancient Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, who died circa 1458 BC. The charred remains of frankincense, called kohl, was crushed and used to make the distinctive eyeliner seen on ancient Egyptians.

Frankincense was one of the consecrated incenses (HaKetoret) described in the Hebrew Bible and Talmud used in Ketoret ceremonies. The frankincense of the Jews, as well as of the Greeks and Romans, is also called *Olibanum* (from the Arabic *al-lubbān*). Old Testament references report it in trade from Sheba (Isaiah 60:6 ; Jeremiah 6:20). Frankincense is mentioned in the Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 4:14).

It was offered on a specialized incense altar in the time when the Tabernacle was located in the First and Second Jerusalem Temples. The ketoret was an important component of the Temple service in Jerusalem. It is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible book of *Exodus* 30:34, where it is named *levonah* (*lebonah* in the Biblical Hebrew), meaning "white" in Hebrew. It was one of the ingredients in the perfume of the sanctuary (Exodus 30:34), and was used as an accompaniment of the meal-offering (Leviticus 2:1, 2:16, 6:15, 24:7). When burnt it emitted a fragrant odour, and the incense was a symbol of the Divine name (Malachi 1:11 ; Song of Solomon 1:3) and an emblem of prayer (Psalm 141:2 ; Luke 1:10 ; Revelation 5:8, 8:3). It was often associated with myrrh (Song of Solomon 3:6, 4:6) and with it was made an offering to the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:11). A specially "pure" kind, *lebhonah zakkah*, was presented with the shewbread (Leviticus 24:7). "While burning incense was accepted as a practice in the later Roman Catholic church, the early church during Roman times forbade the use of incense in services resulting in a rapid decline in the incense trade."

Frankincense was reintroduced to Europe by Frankish Crusaders, although its name refers to its quality, not to the Franks themselves. Although it is better known as "frankincense" to westerners, the resin is also known as *olibanum*, in Arabic *al-lubān* (roughly translated: "that which results from milking"), a reference to the milky sap tapped from the *Boswellia* tree. Some have also postulated that the name comes from the Arabic term for "*Oil of Lebanon*" since Lebanon was the place where the resin was sold and traded with Europeans. The lost city of Ubar, sometimes identified with Irem in what is now the town of Shisr in Oman, is believed to have been a center of the frankincense trade along the recently rediscovered "Incense Road". Ubar was rediscovered in the early 1990s and is now under archaeological excavation.

The Greek historian Herodotus was familiar with Frankincense and knew it was harvested from trees in southern Arabia. He reported that the gum was dangerous to harvest because of venomous snakes that lived in the trees. He goes on to describe the method used by the Arabs to get around this problem, that being the burning of the gum of the styrax tree whose smoke would drive the snakes away. The resin is also mentioned by Theophrastus and by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*. Southern Arabia was a major exporter of frankincense in ancient times, with some of it being traded as far as China. The Chinese writer and customs inspector Zhao Rugua wrote on the origin of Frankincense being traded to China:



"Ruxiang or xunluxiang comes from the three Dashi countries of Murbat (Maloba), Shihr (Shihe), and Dhofar (Nufa), from the depths of the remotest mountains. The tree which yields this drug may generally be compared to the pine tree. Its trunk is notched with a hatchet, upon which the resin flows out, and, when hardened, turns into incense, which is gathered and made into lumps. It is transported on elephants to the Dashi (on the coast), who then load it upon their ships to exchange it for other commodities in Sanfoqi. This is the reason why it is commonly collected at and known as a product of Sanfoqi."

Frankincense comes in many types, and its quality is based on color, purity, aroma, age, and shape. *Silver* and *Hojari* are generally considered the highest grades of frankincense. The Omanis themselves generally consider Silver to be a better grade than Hojari, though most Western connoisseurs think that it should be the other way round. This may be due to climatic conditions with the Hojari smelling best in the relatively cold, damp climate of Europe and North America, whereas Silver may well be more suited to the hot dry conditions of Arabia.

Local market information in Oman suggests that the term *Hojari* encompasses a broad range of high-end frankincense including *Silver*. Resin value is determined not only by fragrance but also by color and clump size, with lighter color and larger clumps being more highly prized. The most valuable Hojari frankincense locally available in Oman is even more expensive than Somalia's *Maydi* frankincense derived from *B. frereana* (see below). The vast majority of this ultra-high-end *B. sacra* frankincense is purchased by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said the ruler of Oman, and is notoriously difficult for western buyers to correctly identify and purchase.

Currently, there are two dissertations which may enable the identification of a few *Olibanum* species according to their specific secondary metabolism products. Frankincense is used in perfumery and aromatherapy. It is also an ingredient that is sometimes used in skincare. The essential oil is obtained by steam distillation of the dry resin. Some of the smell of the frankincense smoke are products of pyrolysis. Frankincense is used in many Christian churches including the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Catholic churches. According to the gospel of Matthew 2:11, gold, frankincense, and myrrh were among the gifts to Jesus by the biblical magi "from out of the East." The Judaic, Christian and Islamic faiths have all used frankincense mixed with oils to anoint newborn infants, initiates, and members entering into new phases of their spiritual lives.

Conversely, the growth of Christianity depressed the market for frankincense during the 4th century AD. Desertification made the caravan routes across the Rub' al Khali or "Empty Quarter" of the Arabian Peninsula more difficult. Additionally, increased raiding by the nomadic Parthians in the Near East caused the frankincense trade to dry up after A.D. 300. Frankincense resin is edible and is used in traditional medicines in Asia for digestion and healthy skin. For internal consumption, it is recommended that frankincense be translucent, with no black or brown impurities. It is often light yellow with a (very) slight greenish tint. It is often chewed like gum, but it is stickier.



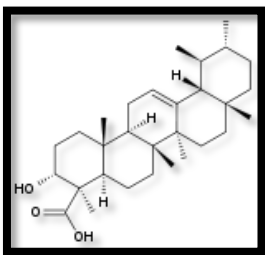
Frankincense olibanum resin. In Ayurvedic medicine Indian frankincense (*Boswellia serrata*), commonly referred to as "*dhoop*," has been used for hundreds of years for treating arthritis, healing wounds, strengthening the female hormone system and purifying the air. The use of frankincense in Ayurveda is called "*dhoopan*". In Indian culture, it is suggested that burning frankincense daily in the house brings good health.

The essential oil of frankincense is produced by steam distillation of the tree resin. The oil's chemical components are 75% monoterpenes, sesquiterpenes, monoterpenols, sesquiterpenols, and ketones. It has a good balsamic sweet fragrance, while the Indian frankincense oil has a very fresh smell. Contrary to recent claims, steam or hydro distilled frankincense oil does not contain any boswellic acid as these components (triterpenoids) are non-volatile and too large to come over in the steam distillation process. The chemistry of the essential oil is mainly monoterpenes and sesquiterpenes with small amounts of diterpenoid components being the upper limit in terms of molecular weight.

Olibanum is characterized by a balsamic-spicy, slightly lemon, fragrance of incense, with a conifer-like undertone. It is used in the perfume, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries. For therapy trials in ulcerative colitis, asthma and rheumatoid arthritis there are only isolated reports and pilot studies from which there is not yet sufficient evidence of safety and efficacy. Similarly, the long-term effects and side effects of taking frankincense has not yet been scientifically investigated. Nonetheless, several preliminary studies have been published. A 2008 study reported that frankincense smoke was a psychoactive drug that relieves depression and anxiety in mice. The researchers found that the chemical compound incensole acetate was responsible for the effects.

In a different study, an enriched extract of "Indian Frankincense" (usually *Boswellia serrata*) was used in a randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study of patients with osteoarthritis. Patients receiving the extract showed significant improvement in their arthritis in as little as seven days. The compound caused no major adverse effects and, according to the study authors, is safe for human consumption and long-term use. In a study published in 2009, it was reported that "Frankincense oil appears to distinguish cancerous from normal bladder cells and suppress cancer cell viability." A 2012 study in healthy volunteers determined that exposure to 11-keto- β -boswellic acid (KBA), a lead boswellic acid in the novel solubilized frankincense extract Boswelan, is increased when taken with food. However, simulations based on a two-compartment pharmacokinetic model with single first-order absorption phase proposed that the observed food interaction loses its relevance for the simulated repeated-dose scenario.^[24]

In a 2012 study, researchers found that the "behavioral effect [of incensole acetate] was concomitant to reduced serum corticosterone levels, dose-dependent down-regulation of corticotropin releasing factor and up-regulation of brain derived neurotrophic factor transcripts IV and VI expression in the hippocampus. These data suggest that IA modulates the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis and influences hippocampal gene expression, leading to beneficial behavioral effects supporting its potential as a novel treatment of depressive-like disorders."^[25]



Structure of β -boswellic acid, one of the main active components of frankincense. These are some of the chemical compounds present in frankincense: "acid resin (56 per cent), soluble in alcohol and having the formula $C_{20}H_{32}O_4$ ", gum (similar to gum arabic) 30–36%, 3-acetyl-beta-boswellic acid (*Boswellia sacra*), alpha-boswellic acid (*Boswellia sacra*), 4-O-methyl-glucuronic acid (*Boswellia sacra*), incensole acetate, phellandrene

Myrra, aromatisk gummiharpiks, der er dannet ved indtørring af den bitre mælkesaft fra en busk af planteslægten [Commiphora](#), som vokser i Somalia. Myrra er rødbrune, uregelmæssige eller dråbeformede stykker og består af ca. 60% gummi og ca. 5% æteriske olier. Myrratinktur anvendes til pensling af blister på tandkødet. Ordet myrra kommer af gr. *myrrha*, af semitisk opr., jf. arab. *murr* 'bitter; myrra'. Myrra har fra de ældste tider været anvendt som

bestanddel i [røgelse](#) og salver og blev i årtusinder f.Kr. brugt af egypterne til [balsamering](#).

Francinsence betyder røgelse.

Safrankrokus (*Crocus sativus*) er en urt, der er naturligt udbredt i Middelhavsområdet. Sandsynligvis stammer planten fra Grækenland og Lilleasien (Tyrkiet). De gamle grækere kendte og dyrkede safran. Også romerne værdsatte safran både som krydderi og som duftspredere. Efter Romerrigets fald vendte safran tilbage til Europa, da korsridderne stiftede bekendtskab med det forfinede arabiske køkken. I dag dyrkes safran især i Iran, Spanien, Grækenland, Tyrkiet og Indien. Selv om safran traditionelt dyrkes i Middelhavslandene, kan den udmærket dyrkes så højt mod nord som i England.



Safran er det dyreste krydderi, der eksisterer - "Det røde guld". Den ekstremt høje pris på krydderiet skyldes den komplicerede og arbejdskrævende proces ved fremstilling og forarbejdning. Lige så meget kvalitetssafran der findes, lige så meget snyd og bedrag er der ved handel med safran. Safran handles hel og stødt, men hele støvfang må foretrækkes, da pulveriseret safran kan være blandet med andre krydderier. De røde stilke kan tilsættes fibre, eller gamle farveløse stilke kan farves eller tilsættes stoffer, der øger vægten. Det kan være vand, olier eller andre fedtstoffer, mineralske pulvere og ler. De dyrebare røde stilke kan blandes med gule stilke uden værdi eller med krydderplanter uden smag eller værdi som curcuma og cartamo. Eller de røde stilke blandes med plantefibre, peli di canna, filamenti di gelatina eller fibre di canapa colorata.

Safran er gult og stammer fra den tørrede tredelte dybrød griffel / støvfang fra safrankrokus. Der er også to kortere stilke i en gul farve, som man kalder de hunlige stilke. De har ikke nogen krydderivirkning, men farver blot det, de kommer i kontakt med, og efterlader en let bitter smag og har derfor ingen handelsværdi. Safran er mørkerød; først ved brug bliver farven gul. Til 1 kg safran bruges der mellem 75.000 og 100.000 støvdragere, der håndplukkes. Safranens anvendelighed er uendelig, men pas på med mængden. Ikke kun grundet prisen, men for meget safran giver bitterhed i retten. Safran blev lige som andre krydderurter anvendt som lægemiddel til midten af 1800-tallet. Det blev brugt mod øjenbetændelse, ved lever-, nyre-, bryst- og mavesygdomme samt som urindrivende middel. Plinius den Ældre påstod, at safran før måltidet hindrede at vinen berusede.

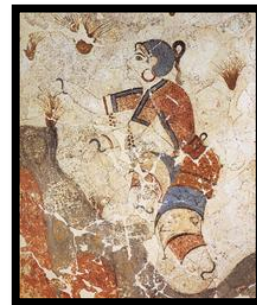
Safran fås både som hel krydderi (de tørrede røde støvdragere) og som stødt. Køber man det hele krydderi, bliver man snydt, hvis støvdragerne er gullige, for de har ikke den samme smagsintensitet som de ægte mørkerøde safrantråde. Det er vigtigt, at den ægte safran ikke forveksles med den giftige variant *colchicum autumnale*, som er en liljeart, der ligner safrankrokus. Safran har en meget karakteristisk eksotisk duft og sødlig smag af honning. Det tørrede krydderi har en mørk rød farve, som bliver til en intens gul farve, når det tilsættes maden. Safran anvendes traditionelt i retter med ris, fisk og skaldyr, blandt andet paella, risotto og fiskesuppen bouillabaisse. Det tilsættes både for at farve retten og som smagsgivende krydderi. Desuden bruges det til at farve bagværk, fx Luciaboller og påskebrød samt julens konfekt.

Saffran, som kommer från gula märken i saffranskrokus, är den dyrbaraste av alla kryddor. Det krävs minst 100 000 — 150 000 krokusar, som måste plockas och rensas för hand, för att utvinna ett kilo torkad saffran. Det tidigaste omnämmandet av saffran är på sumeriska lertavlor från 4000-talet f.Kr. Saffran nämns även i Gamla testamentet. Saffran används som krydda i vissa brödsorter ("saffransbröd"). Numera blandas saffranet i degen, men i äldre tider penslade man bullarna med saffransvatten, när de färdiggräddade just tagits ur ugnen. I Sverige används den främst till lussekatter, men även i till exempel paella, bouillabaisse och den gotländska efterrätten saffranspannkaka.



Ordet saffran kommer från fornfranskans *safran*, som är ett latinskt arveord, *safranum*. Även italienskan och spanskan har ärvt det latinska ordet, *zafferano* respektive *azafrán*. Det latinska ordet är i sig ett lånord från persiska. Det persiska namnet på kryddan är zafarān (زعفران). Iran är en av världens främsta producenter av saffran. Den kultiverade saffranskrokusen *Crocus sativus* är en höstblommande perenn, som inte så vitt känt växer vild. Det är en steril triploid mutant av *Crocus cartwrightianus* som finns i östra medelhavsområdet. Enligt senare forskning har *C. cartwrightianus* uppstått på Kreta, och inte – som tidigare påstods – i

Centralasien. Saffranskrokusen uppstod genom artificiell selektion av odlare som ville ha förlängda märken. Eftersom den är steril bildar den inte frön, utan måste förökas på konstgjord väg. Dess blommor, som kommer i september, varierar i färg från ljus lila till mörk purpur. De torkade märkena är mörkt brunröda, omkring 2 cm långa, nedtill trådmala, upptill trattlikt vidgade.



Saffran består av mer än 150 doft- och aromämnen. Dess färg kommer främst av α -crocin, men den innehåller även litet α - och β -karoten. Aromen kommer av *safranal*, en essentiell olja. Färgämnet - en glykosid - är mycket intensivt. 50 mg rivna till pulver med lite socker ger en tydligt gulaktig skiftning åt 35 liter vatten. Torkad saffran är mycket känsligt för solljus och oxidering, men klarar av värme. Saffran är giftigt i större mängder, och den högsta rekommenderade dagliga dosen är 1,5 gram. Redan vid 5 gram kan man drabbas av bland annat kräkningar och blödningar, och vid 20 gram har man nått en dödlig dos. Talgoxar skadas allvarligt redan av den lilla mängd saffran som ingår i saffransbröd.

I mer än 3 000 år har saffran odlats. Den sterila mutanten av *C. cartwrightianus*, *C. sativus*, uppstod under bronsåldern på Kreta. Det första skriftliga belägget för saffran är troligen från 600-talet f Kr i den assyriska botaniska referensboken som tillkom under Ashurbanipal. Men ännu längre tillbaka finns belägg för att saffran används för medicinskt bruk. För 4 000 år sedan användes den för att bota omkring 90 sjukdomar. Foto: En saffransplockare, detalj av en fresk från Santorini. Minoer avbildade saffran i sina palatsfresker från omkring 1500 — 1600 f Kr. I antikens Egypten och av de grekiska prostituerade användes saffran som parfym. Kleopatra ansåg att saffran var afrodiasiskt, men det användes också för att bota magbesvär. I Irak finns 50 000-åriga spår efter saffran i avbildningar. Sumerer använde vild saffran vid riter, och i Höga visan nämns saffran. Redan innan saffran kultiverades, var det alltså en handelsvara. I Persien förekom en äldre kultiverad sort av saffran (*Crocus sativus* 'Hausknechtii') från 900-talet f Kr där saffran vävdes in i tyg och användes till parfym. Det råder oenighet om när saffran kom till Indien och Kina, och dateringen varierar mellan 900 och 2 500 år tillbaka. Sedan dess har saffran fått en framträdande kulturell roll, bland annat genom att buddhistmunkar färgar sina dräkter i saffran, vilket de gjort ända sedan Siddhartha Gautamas död. I Europa blev saffran vanligare under medeltiden, och användes som färgmedel och krydda. Det tidigaste belägget för saffran i svensk (högfrälse) kosthållning är från 1328. I början på 1900-talet användes saffran mycket mindre i Sverige än tidigare i medicinen men ingick ändå i tre blandningar för medicinskt ändamål: aloedroppar med saffran, Roséns bröstdroppar och opiumvin. Drogen ansågs ha upplivande verkan.

Saffran var redan under forntiden utsatt för förfalskning. Plinius kommenterar ca år 70 e Kr att ingen vara förfalskades i samma grad som den. Så är fortfarande förhållandet. Förfalskning sker genom färgens utdragande, delvis genom tillsats av glycerin, salter, socker etc, som ökar vikten, delvis genom inblandning av alla möjliga, ofta färgade växtdelar, till exempel ståndare och stift av safflor (*Carthamus tinctorius*), strålblommor av *Calendula* (även kallad feminell) eller liknande. Under medeltiden sattes mycket högt pris på saffran som krydda och det var ett viktigt läkemedel. Förfalskningen var belagd med mycket strängt straff. I Nürnberg blev år 1444 en person bränd på bål för förfalskning av saffran, och där blev år 1456 tre personer levande begravna för samma brott. I de flesta tyska städer gjordes under medeltiden inspektioner rörande saffran och andra "läkemedel".

Varje år produceras omkring 300 ton saffran. Iran är det land som står för störst del av produktionen, följd av Spanien, Indien, Grekland, Azerbajdzjan, Marocko och Italien. Beroende på kvalitet varierar priset mellan 7 000 och 76 000 kr/kilo; i västvärlden är det genomsnittliga priset 15 000 kr/kilo. Priset beror på saffranets kvalitet, som avgörs av dess färgmättnad, elasticitet, färskhets, och helhet. ISO har tagit fram en standard för att kvalitetsmärka saffran, ISO 3632, som graderar saffran i fyra kvalitetsgrupper på laborativ väg, efter dess halt av crocin (färg), picrocrocin (smak), och safranal (doft). Många saffransförsäljare använder dock sina egna sinnen i stället, när de ska avgöra saffranets kvalitet, på samma sätt som vinprovare bedömer vin. Traditionellt räknas saffran från Kashmir och L'Aquila vara av den finaste kvaliteten. *Zafferano dell'Aquila* odlas i Abruzzo på 250—1 000 m ö h. För denna kvalitet krävs 200 000 blommor för 1 kg saffran till priset av 1 000 Euro (över 9 000 kr). Abruzzo-saffran har tilldelats den italienska kvalitetsutmärkelsen Denominazione di Origine Protetta, *DOP*.

Doften av saffran brukar beskrivas som påminnande om metallisk honung, med gräs- eller höartade toppnoter, och dess smak likaså höartad och något bitter. I matlagning ger saffran en kännetecknande gul-orange färg. Den är vanlig som krydda i det asiatiska köket, i likörer och i konfekt. Förfalskad saffran är ofta utdrysad med mald gurkmeja (*Curcum longa*), som bara ger färg, men smakar nästan ingenting alls, eller safflor (*Carthamus tinctorius*) som torkats och vars färg och form mycket väl liknar saffran. Saffran skördas i slutet av september och början av oktober. Märkena klipps och torkas försiktigt. När märkena samlas in undviks så långt som möjligt att blanda in något av de gula stiften eller ståndarsträngarna. I lågprissaffran ingår hela pistillen och inte bara dess märke och blir därmed av sekunda kvalitet. *Vitt över jorden sitt sken spred saffranslöjade Eos.* (ur Homeros *Iliaden*)

The United Arab Emirates or the UAE is an Arab country in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf, bordering Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south, as well as sharing sea borders with Qatar and Iran. The UAE is a federation of seven emirates (equivalent to principalities). Each emirate is governed by a hereditary emir, and chooses one of its members to be the president of the federation of seven emirates. The constituent emirates are Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain. The capital is Abu Dhabi, which is also the state's center of commercial and cultural activities. Islam is the official religion of the UAE, and Arabic is the official language.

Since 1962, when Abu Dhabi became the first of the emirates to begin exporting oil, the country's society and economy have been transformed. The late Sheikh Zayed, ruler of Abu Dhabi and president of the UAE at its inception, oversaw the development of the Emirates and steered oil revenues into healthcare, education and national infrastructure. UAE oil reserves are ranked as the world's seventh-largest. It also possesses the world's seventeenth-largest natural gas reserves. The UAE has one of the most developed economies in Western Asia. Per capita income is the world's seventh highest.

The earliest known human habitation in the UAE dated from 5500 BC. At this early stage, there is proof of interaction with the outside world, particularly with civilizations to the northwest in Mesopotamia. These contacts persisted and became wide-ranging, probably motivated by trade in copper from the Hajar Mountains, which commenced around 3000 BC. Foreign trade, the recurring motif in the history of this strategic region, flourished also in later periods, facilitated by the domestication of the camel at the end of the second millennium BC.

By the 1st century AD overland caravan traffic between Syria and cities in southern Iraq began. Also, there was seaborne travel to the important port of Omana (present-day Umm al-Qaiwain) and then to India. These routes were an alternative to the Red Sea route used by the Romans. Pearls had been exploited in the area for millennia but at this time the trade reached new heights. Seafaring was also a mainstay and major fairs were held at Dibba, bringing in merchants from as far as China.

The arrival of envoys from the Islamic prophet Muhammad in 630 heralded the conversion of the region to Islam. After Muhammad, one of the major battles of the Ridda Wars was fought at Dibba resulting in the defeat of the non-Muslims and the triumph of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. In 637, Julfar (today Ras al-Khaimah) was used as a staging post for the Islamic invasion of Sasanian Iran. Over many centuries, Julfar became a wealthy port and pearling center from which dhows travelled throughout the Indian Ocean especially to neighboring land of Sindh and its cities of Thatta and Debal.

Portuguese expansion into the Indian Ocean in the early 16th century following Vasco da Gama's route of exploration saw them battle Safavid Persia up the coast of the Persian Gulf. In 1507, the Portuguese Captain Afonso de Albuquerque sailed a small fleet into the Gulf of Oman and the Straits of Hormuz seeking a way of by-passing Arab traders and taking control of the Indian Ocean to increase the amount of wealth flowing into the Portuguese monarchy's coffers. Vasco da Gama was helped by Ahmad Ibn Majid, a navigator and cartographer from Julfar, to find the spice route from Asia.

During the 16th century, the entire territory came under the direct influence of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Navy defeated Portuguese forces on several fronts including the Gulf coast. The British eventually got the upper hand, but the region was known to the British as the "Pirate Coast", as raiders based there harassed the shipping industry despite both European and Omani navies patrolling the area from the 17th century into the 19th. British expeditions to protect the Indian trade from raiders at Ras al-Khaimah led to campaigns against that headquarters and other harbours along the coast in 1819. The following year, Britain and local rulers signed a treaty to combat piracy along the Gulf coast. Yet according to the local Qawassim version, the piracy issue was a pretext. The British Empire tried to further establish itself in the Persian Gulf region and to secure it from any other European influence, particularly from France and Russia, not from local raiders. This version has been particularly well articulated by the current emir of Sharjah in his 1986 book 'The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf'. From this, and from later agreements, the area became known as the Trucial Coast. Raids continued intermittently until 1835, when the sheikhs agreed not to engage in hostilities at sea. In 1853, they signed a treaty with the British, under which the sheikhs (the "Trucial Sheikhdoms") agreed to a "perpetual maritime truce." It was enforced by the United Kingdom, and disputes among sheikhs were referred to the British for settlement.

Primarily in reaction to the ambitions of other European countries, the United Kingdom and the Trucial Sheikhdoms established closer bonds in an 1892 treaty, similar to treaties entered into by Britain with other principalities in the Persian Gulf. The sheikhs agreed not to dispose of any territory except to Britain and not to enter into relationships with any foreign government other than the United Kingdom without its consent. In return, the British promised to protect the Trucial Coast from all aggression by sea and to help in case of land attack. British suppression of piracy meant that pearling fleets could operate in relative security. However, the British prohibition of the slave trade meant an important source of income was lost to some sheikhs and merchants.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the pearling industry thrived in the relatively calm sea, providing both income and employment to the people of the Persian Gulf. It began to become a good economic resource for the local people. Then the First World War had a severe impact on the pearl fishery, but it was the economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, coupled with the Japanese invention of the cultured pearl, that all but destroyed it. The industry eventually faded away shortly after the Second World War, when the newly independent Government of India imposed heavy taxation on pearls imported from the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The decline of pearling resulted in a very difficult era, with little opportunity to build any infrastructure.

Oil was first discovered in the 1950s. At the beginning of the 1960s, the first oil company teams carried out preliminary surveys and the first cargo of crude was exported from Abu Dhabi in 1962. As oil revenues increased, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, undertook a massive construction program, building schools, housing, hospitals and roads. When Dubai's oil exports commenced in 1969, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the *de facto* ruler of Dubai, was also able to use oil revenues to improve the quality of life of his people.

In 1955, the United Kingdom sided with Abu Dhabi in the latter's dispute with Oman over the Buraimi Oasis, another territory to the south. A 1974 agreement between Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia would have settled the Abu Dhabi-Saudi border dispute; however, the agreement has yet to be ratified by the UAE government and is not recognized by the Saudi government. The border with Oman also remains officially unsettled, but the two governments agreed to delineate the border in May 1999.

The British had set up a development office that helped in some small developments in the emirates. The seven sheikhs of the emirates then decided to form a council to coordinate matters between them and took over the development office. In 1952, they formed the Trucial States Council, and appointed Adi Bitar, Sheikh Rashid's legal advisor, as Secretary General and Legal Advisor to the Council. The council was terminated once the United Arab Emirates was formed. The development of the oil industry in the 1960s, encouraged unification of the sheikhdoms. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan became ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and the British started losing their oil investments and contracts to U.S. oil companies. As independence loomed in 1968, Bahrain and Qatar joined the Trucial States. Differences caused them to leave the union in 1971.

By 1966 it had become clear the British Government could no longer afford to administer and protect what is now the United Arab Emirates. British MPs debated the preparedness of the Royal Navy to defend the trucial sheikhdoms. Secretary of State for Defence Denis Healey reported that the British Armed Forces were seriously overstretched and in some respects dangerously under-equipped to defend the trucial sheikhdoms. On 24 January 1968, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced the government's decision, reaffirmed in March 1971 by Prime Minister Edward Heath to end the treaty relationships with the seven Trucial sheikhdoms that had been, together with Bahrain and Qatar, under British protection. Days after the announcement, the ruler of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, fearing vulnerability, tried to persuade the British to honour the protection treaties by offering to pay the full costs of keeping the British Armed Forces in the Emirates. The British Labour government rejected the offer. After Labour MP Goronwy Roberts informed Sheikh Zayed of the news of British withdrawal, the nine Gulf sheikhdoms attempted to form a union of Arab emirates, but by mid-1971 they were still unable to agree on terms of union even though the British treaty relationship was to expire in December of that year.

Bahrain became independent in August, and Qatar in September 1971. When the British-Trucial Sheikhdoms treaty expired on 1 December 1971, they became fully independent. The rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai decided to form a union between their two emirates independently, prepare a constitution, then call the rulers of the other five emirates to a meeting and offer them the opportunity to join. It was also agreed between the two that the constitution be written by 2 December 1971. On that date, at the Dubai Guesthouse Palace, four other emirates agreed to enter into a union called the United Arab Emirates. The emirates of Bahrain and Qatar were also invited to join the Union, but they declined the invitation. Ras al-Khaimah joined later, in early 1972. In February 1972, the Federal National Council (FNC) was created; it was a 40 member consultative body appointed by the seven rulers.

The UAE joined the Arab League in 1971. It was a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council in May 1981 and its first summit was held in Abu Dhabi. UAE forces joined the allies against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

The UAE supported military operations from the United States and other Coalition nations that are engaged in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan (2001) and Saddam Hussein in Iraq (2003) as well as operations supporting the Global War on Terrorism for the Horn of Africa at Al Dhafra Air Base located outside of Abu Dhabi. The air base also supported Allied operations during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and Operation Northern Watch. The country had already signed a military defense agreement with the U.S. in 1994 and one with France in 1995. In January 2008, France and the UAE signed a deal allowing France to set up a permanent military base in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The UAE joined international military operations in Libya in March 2011.

On 2 November 2004, the UAE's first president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died. His eldest son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, succeeded as Emir of Abu Dhabi. In accordance with the constitution, the UAE's Supreme Council of Rulers elected Khalifa as president. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan succeeded Khalifa as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In January 2006, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the prime minister of the UAE and the ruler of Dubai, died, and the crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum assumed both roles.

The first-ever national elections were held in the UAE on 16 December 2006. A small number of hand-picked voters chose half of the members of the Federal National Council—which is an advisory body.

Largely unaffected by the Arab Spring turmoil, the government has nonetheless clamped down on Internet activism. In April 2011, five activists who signed an online petition calling for reforms were imprisoned. They were pardoned and released in November. Since March 2012 more than 60 activists (later showed evidence of being moved by Iran to create chaos) have been detained without charge (at the time) – some of them supporters of the Islah Islamic group. A member of the ruling family in Ras al-Khaimah was put under house arrest in April 2012 after calling for political openness. Mindful of the protests in nearby Bahrain, in November 2012 the UAE outlawed online mockery of its own government or attempts to organise public protests through social media.

The United Arab Emirates is situated in Southwest Asia, bordering the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, between Oman and Saudi Arabia; it is in a strategic location along southern approaches to the Strait of Hormuz, a vital transit point for world crude oil.

The UAE lies between 22°30' and 26°10' north latitude and between 51° and 56°25' east longitude. It shares a 530-kilometer border with Saudi Arabia on the west, south, and southeast, and a 450-kilometer border with Oman on the southeast and northeast. The land border with Qatar in the Khawr al Udayd area is about nineteen kilometers in the northwest; however, it is a source of ongoing dispute. Following Britain's military departure from UAE in 1971, and its establishment as a new state, the UAE laid claim to islands resulting in disputes with Iran that remain unresolved. UAE also disputes claim on other islands against the neighboring state of Qatar. The largest emirate, Abu Dhabi, accounts for 87% of the UAE's total area (67,340 square kilometers). The smallest emirate, Ajman, encompasses only 259 square kilometers

The UAE coast stretches for more than 650 kilometers along the southern shore of the Persian Gulf. Most of the coast consists of salt pans that extend far inland. The largest natural harbor is at Dubai, although other ports have been dredged at Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and elsewhere. Numerous islands are found in the Persian Gulf, and the ownership of some of them has been the subject of international disputes with both Iran and Qatar. The smaller islands, as well as many coral reefs and shifting sandbars, are a menace to navigation. Strong tides and occasional windstorms further complicate ship movements near the shore. The UAE also has a stretch of the Al Bāḥīnah coast of the Gulf of Oman, although the Musandam Peninsula, the very tip of Arabia by the Strait of Hormuz is an exclave of Oman separated by the UAE.

South and west of Abu Dhabi, vast, rolling sand dunes merge into the Rub al-Khali (Empty Quarter) of Saudi Arabia. The desert area of Abu Dhabi includes two important oases with adequate underground water for permanent settlements and cultivation. The extensive Liwa Oasis is in the south near the undefined border with Saudi Arabia. About 100 kilometers to the northeast of Liwa is the Al-Buraimi oasis, which extends on both sides of the Abu Dhabi-Oman border. Lake Zakher is a man-made lake near the border with Oman.

Prior to withdrawing from the area in 1971, Britain delineated the internal borders among the seven emirates in order to preempt territorial disputes that might hamper formation of the federation. In general, the rulers of the emirates accepted the British intervention, but in the case of boundary disputes between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and also between Dubai and Sharjah, conflicting claims were not resolved until after the UAE became independent. The most complicated borders were in the Al-Hajar al-Gharbi Mountains, where five of the emirates contested jurisdiction over more than a dozen enclaves.

The oasis grow date palms, acacia and eucalyptus trees. In the desert the flora is very sparse and consists of grasses and thornbushes. The indigenous fauna had come close to extinction because of intensive hunting, which has led to a conservation program on Bani Yas Island initiated by

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the 1970s, resulting in the survival of, for example, Arabian oryx and leopards. Coastal fish and mammals consist mainly of mackerel, perch and tuna, as well as sharks and whales.

The climate of the U.A.E is subtropical-arid with hot summers and warm winters. The hottest months are July and August, when average maximum temperatures reach above 45 °C (113.0 °F) on the coastal plain. In the Al Hajar Mountains, temperatures are considerably lower, a result of increased elevation. Average minimum temperatures in January and February are between 10 and 14 °C (50 and 57.2 °F). During the late summer months, a humid southeastern wind known as Sharqi (i.e. "Easterly") makes the coastal region especially unpleasant. The average annual rainfall in the coastal area is less than 120 mm (4.7 in), but in some mountainous areas annual rainfall often reaches 350 mm (13.8 in). Rain in the coastal region falls in short, torrential bursts during the summer months, sometimes resulting in floods in ordinarily dry wadi beds. The region is prone to occasional, violent dust storms, which can severely reduce visibility. The Jebel Jais mountain cluster in Ras al-Khaimah has experienced snow only twice since records began.

The United Arab Emirates is a federation of absolute hereditary monarchies. It is governed by a Federal Supreme Council made up of the seven emirs of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah, Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah and Umm al-Qaiwain. All responsibilities not granted to the national government are reserved to the emirates. A percentage of revenues from each emirate are allocated to the UAE's central budget.

Although elected by the Supreme Council, the president and prime minister are essentially hereditary. The emir of Abu Dhabi holds the presidency, and the emir of Dubai is prime minister. All but one prime minister served concurrently as vice president. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was the UAE's president from the nation's founding until his death on 2 November 2004. On the following day the Federal Supreme Council elected his son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to the post. Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is the heir apparent.

The UAE convened a half-elected Federal National Council in 2006. The FNC consists of 40 members drawn from all the emirates. Half are appointed by the rulers of the constituent emirates, and the other half are indirectly elected to serve two-year terms. However, the FNC is restricted to a largely consultative role. In December 2008, the Supreme Council approved constitutional amendments both to empower the FNC and to improve government transparency and accountability. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) eGovernment is the extension of the UAE Federal Government in its electronic form.

The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates confers equality, liberty, rule of law, presumption of innocence in legal procedures, inviolability of the home, freedom of movement, freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of communication, freedom of religion, freedom of council and association, freedom of occupation, freedom to be elected to office and others onto all citizens, within the limit of the law.

A constitutionally independent judiciary includes the Federal Supreme Court. However, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah do not belong to the national judiciary. All emirates have their own secular and Islamic law for civil, criminal, and high courts. The court system comprises Sharia courts and civil courts. The Personal Status Law, which is based on Sharia and was enacted in 2005, regulates matters such as marriage, divorce and child custody. In criminal matters a woman's testimony is worth half of that of a man before a court. Sharia courts have exclusive jurisdiction to hear family disputes, including matters involving divorce, inheritances, child custody, child abuse and guardianship of minors. Sharia courts may, at the federal level only, also hear appeals of certain criminal cases including rape, robbery, driving under the influence of alcohol and related crimes. Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah are not part of the federal judicial system.

Homosexual relationships are illegal: article 80 of the Abu Dhabi Penal Code makes sodomy punishable with imprisonment of up to 14 years, while article 177 of the Penal Code of Dubai imposes imprisonment of up to 10 years on consensual sodomy. Foreigners generally receive deportation, which is sometimes temporary. Prospective foreign employees infected with hepatitis, tuberculosis, or HIV will not be given work visas and have to leave the country.

During the month of Ramadan, between sunrise and sunset, it is illegal to publicly eat, drink (even water), or smoke. Exceptions are made for pregnant or nursing women, as well as children. This applies to non-Muslims as well as Muslims, and failure to comply may result in arrest.

Article 1 of the 1987 Federal Penal Code states that "provisions of the Islamic Law shall apply to the crimes of doctrinal punishment, punitive punishment and blood money." The Federal Penal Code repealed only those provisions within the penal codes of individual Emirates which are contradictory to the Federal Penal Code. Hence, both are enforceable simultaneously. The Federal Supreme Court ruled that wife beating is not illegal, as long as it leaves no physical marks on the victim.

Many expatriate workers, mostly of South Asian origin, have after their arrival in the UAE been turned into debt-ridden *de facto* indentured servants. Confiscation of passports, although illegal, occurs on a large scale, primarily from unskilled or semi-skilled employees. Labourers often toil in intense heat with temperatures reaching 54 degrees celsius (129 degrees Fahrenheit) in the cities in August. Temperatures in the desert can be higher. Official temperatures are censored during the summer months – this is a common practice among all Gulf countries. Although attempts have been made since 2009 to enforce a midday break rule, these are frequently flouted. Those labourers who do receive a midday break often have no suitable place to rest.

Police departments and non-Government organizations provide shelter and support for human trafficking victims until they are able to acquire the right documents and many victims are then sent home at the Government's expense, under the Crime Victim Assistance Programme. These shelters include the Dubai Women's and Children's Foundation, which was established in July 2007, and Ewaa in Abu Dhabi, which opened in late 2008, as well as the Human Rights Care Department in Dubai and the Social Support Centre in Abu Dhabi, which have been operating for several years.

The issue of sexual abuse among female domestic servants is an area of concern, particularly given that domestic servants are not covered by the UAE Labor Law of 1980 or the Draft Labor Law of 2007. Worker protests have been suppressed and protesters imprisoned without due process.

In 2004, the Dubai police opened designated departments in all emirate police stations that are mandated to protect the human rights of both victims and perpetrators of crime. The UAE government is currently studying the establishment of a national human-rights commission.

The UAE's liberal climate towards foreign cooperation, investment and modernization has prompted extensive diplomatic and commercial relations with other countries. It plays a significant role in OPEC and the UN, and is one of the founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Emirates have long maintained close relations with Egypt and remain the highest investor in the country from among the rest of the Arab world. Pakistan had been first to formally recognize the UAE upon its formation and continues to be one of its major economic and trading partners with about 400,000 expatriates receiving employment in the UAE.

India's large expat community in the UAE also has over the centuries evolved into current close political, economic and cultural ties. The largest demographic presence in the Emirates is Indian. Following British military withdrawal from UAE in 1971, and the establishment of UAE as a newly formed state, the UAE disputes rights to a number of islands in the Persian Gulf against Iran. However the dispute has not significantly impacted relations because of the large Iranian community presence and strong economic ties.

In its dispute with the USA and Israel, Iran has repeatedly threatened to close the strait at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, a vital oil-trade route. Therefore, in July 2012, the UAE began operating a key overland oil pipeline which bypasses the Strait of Hormuz.

Commercially, the UK and Germany are the UAE's largest export markets and bilateral relations have long been close as a large number of their nationals reside in the UAE. Diplomatic relations between UAE and Japan were established as early as UAE's independence in December 1971.^[82] The two countries had always enjoyed friendly ties and trade between each other. Exports from the UAE to Japan include crude oil and natural gas and imports from Japan to UAE include cars and electric items.

The UAE has continuously been a major contributor of emergency relief to regions affected by conflict and natural disasters in the developing world. The main UAE governmental agency for foreign aid is the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) which was established in 1971. Since its establishment, the ADFD has provided over Dh12.6 billion (US\$3.45 billion) in soft loans and grants to countries mainly in Africa.

France and the United States have played the most strategically significant roles with defense cooperation agreements and military material provision. The UAE discussed with France the possibility of a purchase of 60 Rafale fighter aircraft in January 2013.

The United Arab Emirates is divided into seven emirates. Dubai is the most populated Emirate with 35.6% of the UAE population. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has a further 31.2%, meaning that over two-thirds of the UAE population live in either Abu Dhabi or Dubai.

Abu Dhabi has an area of 67,340 square kilometres, which is 86.7% of the country's total area, excluding the islands. It has a coastline extending for more than 400 kilometres and is divided for administrative purposes into three major regions. The Emirate of Dubai extends along the Persian Gulf coast of the UAE for approximately 72 kilometres. Dubai has an area of 3,885 square kilometers, which is equivalent to 5% of the country's total area, excluding the islands. The Emirate of Sharjah extends along approximately 16 kilometers of the UAE's Persian Gulf coastline and for more than 80 kilometers into the interior. The northern emirates which include Fujairah, Ajman, Ras al-Khaimah, and Umm al-Qaiwain all have a total area of 3,881 square kilometres. There are two areas under joint control. One is jointly controlled by Oman and Ajman, the other by Fujairah and Sharjah.

There is an Omani exclave surrounded by UAE territory, known as Wadi Madha. It is located halfway between the Musandam peninsula and the rest of Oman in the Emirate of Sharjah. It covers approximately 75 square kilometres (29 sq mi) and the boundary was settled in 1589. The north-east corner of Madha is closest to the Khor Fakkan-Fujairah road, barely 10 metres (33 ft) away. Within the Omani exclave of Madha, is a UAE exclave called Nahwa, also belonging to the Emirate of Sharjah. It is about 8 kilometres (5 mi) on a dirt track west of the town of New Madha. It consists of about forty houses with its own clinic and telephone exchange.

The UAE has a relatively high Human Development Index among the Asian continent, ranking forty-first globally. In 2011, UAE is ranked as the 14th best nation in the world for doing business based on its economy and regulatory environment, ranked by the Doing Business 2011 Report published by the World Bank Group

The GDP growth rate for 2010 was 3.20%. CPI inflation in the April 2008 — April 2009 year was 1.9%. The national debt as of June 2009 was \$142 billion. In 2009, its GDP, as measured by purchasing power parity, stood at US\$ 400.4 billion. With a population of just under 900,000 Abu Dhabi was labeled "The richest city in the world" by a CNN article.

Petroleum and natural gas exports play an important role in the economy, especially in Abu Dhabi. More than 85% of the UAE's economy was based on the exports of natural resources in 2009. The UAE has tried to reduce its dependency on oil exports by diversifying the economy, particularly in the financial, tourism and construction sectors. While Abu Dhabi remained relatively conservative in its approach, Dubai, which has far smaller oil reserves, was bolder in its diversification policy.

Emirati law does not allow trade unions to exist. The right to collective bargaining and the right to strike are not recognised, and the Ministry of Labour has the power to force workers to go back to work. Migrant workers who participate in a strike can have their work permits cancelled and be deported.

The UAE's economy, particularly that of Dubai, was badly hit by the financial crisis of 2007–2010. In 2009, the country's economy shrank by 4.00% and the property sector and construction went into decline. However, tourism, trade and the retail sector have remained buoyant and the UAE's overseas investments are expected to support its full economic recovery. Concern remains about the property sector. Property prices in Dubai fell dramatically when Dubai World, the government construction company, sought to delay a debt payment.

The UAE has been spending billions of dollars on infrastructure. These developments are particularly evident in the larger emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The northern emirates are rapidly following suit, providing major incentives for developers of residential and commercial property.

Dubai International Airport was the 6th busiest airport in the world by international passenger traffic in 2008.^[98] As roads in the western and southern regions are still relatively undeveloped, residents prevalently use airplanes as the main or alternative mode of transportation.^[99] A 1,200 km (750 mi) country-wide national railway is under construction which will connect all the major cities and ports. The Dubai Metro is the first urban train network in the Arabian Peninsula.^[101] The major ports of the United Arab Emirates are Khalifa Port, Mina Zayed, Port Jebel Ali, Port Rashid, Port Khalid, Port Saeed, and Port Khor Fakkan.

The UAE has signed peaceful nuclear agreements with France, United States, and South Korea, and a MOU with the United Kingdom.

The UAE is presently serviced by two telecommunications operators, Etisalat and Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company ("du"). Etisalat operated a monopoly until du launched mobile services in February 2007. Internet subscribers are expected to increase from 0.904 million in 2007 to 2.66 million in 2012. The authorities filter websites for religious, political and sexual content.

The demographics of the UAE is extremely diverse. In 2010, the UAE's population was estimated at 8,264,070, of whom only 13% were UAE nationals or Emiratis, while the majority of the population were expatriates. The country's net migration rate stands at 21.71, the world's highest. Under Article 8 of UAE Federal Law no. 17, an expatriate can apply for UAE citizenship after residing in the country for 20 years, providing that person has never been convicted of a crime and can speak fluent Arabic.

With a male/female sex ratio of 2.2 for the total population and 2.75 for the 15–65 age group, the UAE's gender imbalance is second highest in the world after Qatar.

In 2009, Emirati citizens accounted for 16.5% of the total population; South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) constituted the largest group, making up 58.4% of the total; other Asians made up 16.7% while Western expatriates were 8.4% of the total population.

There is a growing presence of Europeans especially in multi-cultural cities such as Dubai. Western expatriates, from Europe, Australia, Northern Africa, Africa and Latin America make up 500,000 of the UAE population. The UAE has also attracted a small number of expatriates from countries in Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania. More than 100,000 British nationals live in the country. The rest of the population were from other Arab states.

The average life expectancy is 76.7 years (2012), higher than for any other Arab country. About 88% of the population of the United Arab Emirates is urban.

Islam is the largest and the official state religion of the UAE, the government follows a policy of tolerance toward other religions and rarely interferes in the activities of non-Muslims. The government imposes restrictions on spreading other religions through any form of media as it is considered a form of proselytizing. There are approximately 31 churches throughout the country, one Hindu temple in the region of Bur Dubai, one Sikh Gurudwara in Jebel Ali and also a Buddhist temple in Al Garhoud.

Based on the Ministry of Economy census in 2005, 76% of the total population was Muslim, 9% Christian, and 15% other (mainly Hindu). Census figures do not take into account the many "temporary" visitors and workers while also counting Baha'is and Druze as Muslim. Among Emirati citizens, 85% are Sunni Muslim, while Shi'a Muslims are 15%, mostly concentrated in the emirates of Sharjah and Dubai. Omani immigrants are mostly Ibadi, while Sufi influences exist too.

According to some sources, between 5 to 8% of the population are atheist. People of all faiths or no faith are given equal protection under the country's constitution and laws.

Arabic is the national and official language of the United Arab Emirates. The Gulf dialect of Arabic is spoken natively by the Emirati people. English is used as a second language, and as the primary *lingua franca*. Malayalam, the official language of Kerala (India) is spoken widely by the Malayali community that forms a huge majority of the Indian Diaspora in the UAE. Other widely used languages are Hindi-Urdu and Tagalog, spoken by the large South Asian and Filipino diasporas, respectively.

The United Arab Emirates has a diverse and multicultural society. Major holidays in Dubai include *Eid al Fitr*, which marks the end of *Ramadan*, and National Day (2 December), which marks the formation of the United Arab Emirates.

Most Emirati males prefer to wear a kandura, an ankle-length white tunic woven from wool or cotton, and most Emirati women wear an abaya, a black over-garment that covers most parts of the body. The non-governmental campaign UAE Dress Code aims to educate the expat population on local dressing and its sensitivity to Emirati population. Each of the seven semiautonomous emirates has its own rules about attire. Dubai is the most liberal in that regard, allowing miniskirts and bikinis, while Ras al-Khaimah adopted a rule in April 2013 prohibiting bikinis, as well as tight swimsuits for males, on public beaches.

Ancient Emirati poetry was strongly influenced by the 8th-century Arab scholar Al Khalil bin Ahmed. The earliest known poet in the UAE is Ibn Majid, born between 1432 and 1437 in Ras Al-Khaimah. The most famous Emirati writers were Mubarak Al Oqaili (1880–1954), Salem bin Ali al Owais (1887–1959) and Ahmed bin Sulayem (1905–1976). Three other poets from Sharjah, known as the Hirah group, are observed to have been heavily influenced by the Apollo and romantic poets.^[133] The Sharjah International Book Fair is the oldest and largest in the country.

The list of museums in the United Arab Emirates includes some of regional repute, most famously Sharjah with its Heritage District containing 17 museums, which in 1998 was the Cultural Capital of the Arab World. In Dubai, the area of Al Quoz has attracted a number of art galleries as well as museums such as the Salsali Private Museum. Abu Dhabi has established a culture district on Saadiyat Island. There, six grand projects are planned, including the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Dubai also plans to build a Kunsthal museum and a district for galleries and artists.

The United Arab Emirates is a part of the khaliji tradition, and is also known for Bedouin folk music. Liwa is a type of music and dance performed mainly in communities that contain descendants of Bantu peoples from the African Great Lakes region. The Dubai Desert Rock Festival is also another major festival consisting of heavy metal and rock artists. The cinema of the United Arab Emirates is minimal but expanding.

The Media of the United Arab Emirates plays an important role in the region. Dubai Media City and twofour54, Abu Dhabi's media zone, were set up to attract key players. The UAE is home to major pan-Arab broadcasters, including the Middle East Broadcasting Centre and Orbit Showtime Network. On 25 September 2007 Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum decreed that journalists can no longer be prosecuted or imprisoned for reasons relating to their work.^[140] At the same time, the UAE has made it illegal to disseminate online material that can threaten "public order". Prison terms have been given to those who "deride or damage" the reputation of the state and "display contempt" for religion.

The traditional food of the Emirates has always been rice, fish, and meat. The people of the United Arab Emirates have adopted most of their foods from the surrounding countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Seafood has been the mainstay of the Emirati diet for centuries. Meat and rice are other staple foods; lamb and mutton are the more favored meats, then goat and beef. Popular beverages are coffee and tea, which can be supplemented with cardamom, saffron, or mint to give them a distinct flavor

Muslims are prohibited from eating pork, so it is not included in Arab menus. Hotels frequently have pork substitutes such as beef sausages and veal rashers on their breakfast menus. If pork is available, it is clearly labeled as such.

Alcohol is generally only served in hotel restaurants and bars (but not in Sharjah). All nightclubs and golf clubs are permitted to sell alcohol. Specific supermarkets may sell alcohol and pork, but these products are sold in separate sections.

Football is the most popular sport in the UAE. Emirati football clubs Al-Ain, Al-Wasl, Al-Shabbab ACD, Al-Sharjah, Al-Wahda, and Al-Ahli are the most popular teams and enjoy the reputation of long-time regional champions.^[144] The great rivalries keep the UAE energized as people fill the streets when their favorite team wins. The United Arab Emirates Football Association was first established in 1971 and since then has dedicated its time and effort to promoting the game, organizing youth programs and improving the abilities of not only its players, but of the officials and coaches involved with its regional teams. The UAE national football team qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 1990 with Egypt. It was the third consecutive World Cup with two Arab nations qualifying, after Kuwait and Algeria in 1982, and Iraq and Algeria again in 1986. The UAE won the Gulf Cup Championship two times. They won the first cup in January 2007 held in Abu Dhabi and has won the recent cup in January 2013 held in Bahrain.

Cricket is one of the most popular sports in the UAE, largely because of the expatriate population from the Indian subcontinent, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The Sharjah Cricket Association Stadium in Sharjah has hosted 4 international test cricket matches so far. Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi also hosted international cricket matches. Dubai has two cricket stadiums (Dubai Cricket Ground No.1 and No.2) with a third, the DSC Cricket Stadium as part of Dubai Sports City. Dubai is also home to the International Cricket Council. The UAE national cricket team qualified for the 1996 Cricket World Cup and narrowly missed out on qualification for the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

Formula One is particularly popular in the United Arab Emirates, and is annually held at the picturesque Yas Marina Circuit. The race is held at evening time, and is the first ever Grand Prix to start in daylight and finish at night. Other popular sports include camel racing, falconry, endurance riding, and tennis.

The education system through secondary level is monitored by the Ministry of Education in all emirates except Abu Dhabi, where it falls under the authority of the Abu Dhabi Education Council. It consists of primary schools, middle schools and high schools. The public schools are government-funded and the curriculum is created to match the United Arab Emirates development's goals and values. The medium of instruction in the public school is Arabic with emphasis on English as a second language. There are also many private schools which are internationally accredited. Public schools in the country are free for citizens of the UAE, while the fees for private schools vary.

The higher education system is monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education. The ministry also is responsible for admitting students to its undergraduate institutions. The literacy rate in 2007 was 91%. Currently there are thousands of nationals pursuing formal learning at 86 adult education centres spread across the country.

The UAE has shown a strong interest in improving education and research. Enterprises include the establishment of the CERT Research Centers and the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology and Institute for Enterprise Development. According to the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, the top-ranking universities in the country are the United Arab Emirates University (1217th worldwide), the American University of Sharjah (2833th) and University of Sharjah (3046th). The life expectancy at birth in the UAE is at 78.5 years. Cardiovascular disease is the principal cause of death in the UAE, constituting 28% of total deaths; other major causes are accidents and injuries, malignancies, and congenital anomalies.

In February 2008, the Ministry of Health unveiled a five-year health strategy for the public health sector in the northern emirates, which fall under its purview and which, unlike Abu Dhabi and Dubai, do not have separate healthcare authorities. The strategy focuses on unifying healthcare policy and improving access to healthcare services at reasonable cost, at the same time reducing dependence on overseas treatment. The ministry plans to add three hospitals to the current 14, and 29 primary healthcare centres to the current 86. Nine were scheduled to open in 2008.

The introduction of mandatory health insurance in Abu Dhabi for expatriates and their dependants was a major driver in reform of healthcare policy. Abu Dhabi nationals were brought under the scheme from 1 June 2008 and Dubai followed for its government employees. Eventually, under federal law, every Emirati and expatriate in the country will be covered by compulsory health insurance under a unified mandatory scheme. Recently the country has been benefiting from medical tourists from all over the GCC. The UAE currently attracts medical tourists seeking plastic surgery and advanced procedures, cardiac and spinal surgery, and dental treatment, as health services have higher standards than other Arab countries in the Persian Gulf.

Ægteskab i UAE

Traditionally, the ideal marriage was tribal, related families encouraging their offspring to marry cousins or other relatives in order to increase and strengthen the tribe, or occasionally to marry into another tribe in order to heal rifts between families. Another reason for such marriages was that families knew the background of the partner.

As is the case in some Latin countries, young couples in the region are allowed to meet under the watchful eye of a chaperon. In some of the stricter Gulf societies, however, the marriage is arranged without any part of the female partner's body (including her face) having been seen by the prospective groom, who must rely on the reports of his female relatives as to his wife's appearance.

There are three main elements in an Arab marriage. First, the groom must discuss and agree the dowry with the bride's father. This might include gold, jewellery and clothing and is usually of considerable value. After the dowry settlement comes the actual marriage contract, which is conducted by a legal or religious representative. The bride is asked in the absence of the prospective groom if she agrees to the marriage and this question is then put to the groom. After agreement, the groom joins hands with his future father-in-law and, with two witnesses present, the marriage becomes official. However, there's another stage before the couple actually meet as man and wife: the wedding party. Celebrations are segregated, with the women in one section of the house and the men in another. Finally, on the last night of celebrations, the couple meet, accompanied by all their friends, and eventually leave on their honeymoon. On their return, they either set up home with the groom's parents and become members of the extended family or – as is increasingly the case – set up home by themselves.

According to Sharia law, a Muslim man may have four wives, provided that he can look after them materially and treats them equally. This practice is now dying out, however, not only because only a few can afford it, but also because women are becoming more independent and assertive and many refuse to accept it. In fact, a Muslim woman can insert a clause in the marriage contract that restricts her husband from marrying another woman for as long as the contract is valid. The wife also retains her own name after marriage. Although gender roles have always been clearly defined in the Islamic world, with the man as 'provider' and the woman as 'nurturer', both man and wife are increasingly going out to work, although this is much less common in Saudi Arabia, where there are restrictions on women working, except in culturally 'acceptable' occupations such as medicine and teaching. However, many Saudi men are reluctant to marry doctors and nurses, who have been exposed to male bodies.

A man can divorce his wife simply by saying 'I divorce you' three times. He can rescind the divorce if this was done in the heat of the moment, but only if the wife agrees (and only on three occasions!). On the other hand, even if a wife has good reason to seek a divorce (e.g. if her husband has been unfaithful, abused or deserted her, or engaged in criminal activity), she must go to a court for the case to be heard. The husband must maintain a divorced wife and any children from the marriage if the wife is unable to support herself. He can claim custody of any sons when they reach the age of ten. A female divorcee usually returns to her family, and few remarry.

Although a Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim man unless he converts to Islam, the reverse isn't the case. However, non-Muslim women are often pressurised into converting, and there have been many cases of foreign women marrying Arabs and then discovering that the local culture and lifestyle are unacceptably restrictive. It should also be noted that, in the event of the breakdown of such a union, the children are usually kept by the husband in his home country.

Expatriate workers can usually be married in the Gulf, provided that they meet the civil and religious requirements of their home country. Embassy and consulate staff sometimes perform civil marriage ceremonies, again provided that certain requirements are met. Religious ceremonies can be arranged, but only in countries that allow churches or similar non-Muslim places of worship. This isn't the case in Saudi Arabia. If people of different nationalities marry, the authorities sometimes scrutinise the circumstances to ensure that marriages of convenience aren't taking place in order to circumvent immigration requirements.

This article is an extract from *Living and Working in Gulf States & Saudi Arabia*.

Water in Abu Dhabi: The three cities of Abu Dhabi Emirate – the coastal city Abu Dhabi itself (more than one million inhabitants) as well as the inland oases Al Ain (0.4 million inhabitants) and Liwa (about 0.1 million inhabitants) – receive their drinking water supply entirely from desalinated seawater. Their wastewater is being treated and reused for the irrigation of green spaces.

There are two main sources of water in Abu Dhabi Emirate: Desalinated seawater and groundwater. While groundwater is used for agriculture in Al Ain and Liwa, drinking water is provided almost entirely from desalinated seawater across the Emirate. In 2008, groundwater contributed 71% to total water demand for all purposes, desalinated water 24% and treated wastewater 5%.

Seawater desalination. In 2010 there were eight seawater desalination plants in Abu Dhabi owned and operated by eight joint ventures: Tawilah A, Tawilah B, the five Umm al Nar plants and the Al Mirfa plant. These joint ventures between the government and foreign companies, which are allowed to own up to 40% of the shares, are called Independent Water & Power Producers (IWPPs). They operate under Build-Own-Operate (BOO) contracts with the government.

Groundwater. 90% of groundwater in Abu Dhabi Emirate is saline, in some cases up to eight times as much as seawater. There are only two freshwater aquifers. Natural groundwater recharge is estimated at about 300 million cubic meters per year. Brackish groundwater is mostly used for the irrigation of date palms which are relatively salt-tolerant. Recharge dams have been built on wadis in order to prevent flood water to flow into the sea, recharging it instead to aquifers. Unplanned and uncontrolled groundwater withdrawals, especially for agriculture and forestry, total over 2,000 million cubic meters per year and have resulted in declining groundwater levels and quality.

Groundwater recharge. Artificial groundwater recharge with desalinated seawater has been piloted in 2003 near the Liwa Oasis and construction of large-scale recharge facilities has begun in 2008. The objective is to create a 90-day reserve instead of the current 48-hour reserve for drinking water supply, in order to protect the emirate against the risk of terrorist attacks or oil spills that would shut down the entire water supply. Recharge will occur during summer when the desalination plants generate surplus freshwater. Desalination plants in Abu Dhabi use the multi-stage flash distillation technology which uses steam from thermal power plants as an energy source. Their water production thus is proportional to electricity production and reaches a peak during the summer when electricity production is highest to power air conditioning. The recharge scheme is currently under construction and is due to be completed by 2013.

Sanitation. Approximately 550,000 cubic metres of wastewater is generated in Abu Dhabi every day and treated in 20 wastewater treatment plants. Almost all of the wastewater is being reused to irrigate green spaces. While most wastewater treatment plants are publicly owned and operated, four large new plants have been built by joint ventures under build-own operate transfer (BOOT) arrangements. One such contract for two plants was awarded in 2008, one in Abu Dhabi itself with a capacity of 300,000 cubic meter per day and one in Al Ain with a capacity of 130,000 cubic meter per day. Contracts for two other plants were awarded to Biwater under a similar structure. A Strategic Tunnel Enhancement Programme (STEP) is to be implemented between 2008 and 2014 to establish a tunnel that will comprise 40 kilometres of deep sewerage tunnel and two new large pumping stations to relieve Abu Dhabi Island.

The model green city called Masdar City is to be supplied by a desalination plant to be powered with solar energy. Green spaces and agriculture near the city are to be irrigated with grey water and reclaimed water.

Water use: About half of the desalinated seawater is used for irrigation of green spaces, as well as in agriculture. The other half is used for domestic uses. Freshwater use per capita is about 650 liter per day, including water supplied for the irrigation of green spaces. As of 2009, in Al Ain "due to constraints on both the transmission and distribution networks, up to 45 percent of customers (were) on a restricted (intermittent) supply".

History: Abu Dhabi has witnessed an explosion of wealth and population since its independence in 1971 and the oil boom of 1973. Before, groundwater was the only source of water supply. It was very scarce, since there is little recharge and most of the aquifers are highly saline. It was only through seawater desalination that the growth of Abu Dhabi became possible. Seawater desalination used thermal technologies that couple desalination with power production. Water was provided free of charge. The plants were initially owned and operated by the government through the Water and Electricity Department, and financing was provided by the state from oil revenues.

Sector reform. In the mid-1990s the government decided to reorganize the water and electricity sector. The reform was inspired by the pro-private sector and pro-competition climate reigning during the 1990s, and it was implemented through foreign advisors. The reform of both sectors was based on the same principle of unbundling production, transmission and distribution into separate companies:

- Production of electricity and desalinated water in plants owned and operated by private companies,
- Transmission of bulk water to Al Ain and Liwa oasis by a public asset holding company and a private operating company,
- Distribution by two public companies, one for Abu Dhabi and Liwa, the other for Al Ain.

The sector would be regulated by a public agency that would have a certain degree of autonomy from the government. The new structure was formally adopted through law No (2) concerning the regulation of the water and electricity sector passed in 1998. The holding company ADWEA and the regulator, the Regulation and Supervision Bureau (RSB), were functionally established shortly afterwards. In 2000 the government signed the first contract for a private power and desalination plant. The sanitation sector was initially left out of the reform and remained a responsibility of the municipality, despite heavy investments that were required for wastewater treatment and reuse. Only in 2005 a separate sanitation operator, Abu Dhabi Sewerage Services Company, was established.

Environmental awareness and water conservation. In the first decade of the 21st century the protection of the environment gradually became more important in Abu Dhabi. In 2005 the Emirate created the Environment Department, which established a Strategic Water Master Plan published in 2009. When presenting the Master Plan, the chairman of the Environment Agency said that the future would be very challenging unless action was taken to reduce water consumption, which is among the highest per capita in the world. The Plan describes the current status and the environmental and technical issues related to projections of demand and supply, groundwater abstraction, desalination, water supply and sanitation, irrigation, wastewater treatment and Emirati governance and institutions.^[1] The government has run a media campaign to encourage people to save water. It has also distributed water-saving toilets and showerheads free of charge. The emirate also is in the process of expanding the use of reclaimed water.

Policy. Abu Dhabi is ruled by a Sheikh. Below him is an Executive Council taking care of day-to-day policy-making. The Council is chaired by the Crown Prince. The Chairmen of four Departments and a number of Authorities are members of the Executive Council. The government structure is not comparable to the Western structure of Ministries and separate technical authorities under those Ministries. Authorities in Abu Dhabi are rather comparable to Ministries. Water supply and sanitation in Abu Dhabi is the responsibility of the Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA). As mentioned above, the Chairman of ADWEA is a member of the Executive Council and holds the rank of a Minister.

Legal framework. The sector is governed by two laws:

- Law No (2) of 1998 Concerning the Regulation of the Water and Electricity Sector in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and
- Law No (17) of 2005 Concerning the Establishment of Abu Dhabi Sewerage Services Company (ADSSC).

Service provision. Eight private Integrated Water and Power Production (IWPP) companies operate on the Build-Own-Operate (BOO) formula, producing and selling desalinated water to the Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Company (ADWEC). ADWEC is owned by the government through ADWEA and is the single buyer of desalinated water and the single supplier of water for the distribution companies. The Abu Dhabi Transmission and Dispatch Company (TRANSCO), a public company, transports water from the desalination plants to the networks of the distribution companies. The Abu Dhabi distribution company (ADDC) sells water and electricity to approximately 216,000 customers in Abu Dhabi and its suburbs. The Al Ain distribution company does the same in Al Ain. The Abu Dhabi Sewerage Services Company is a public company in charge of sanitation.

Regulation. The Regulation and Supervision Bureau (RSB) for the Water and Electricity Sector in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi enforces relevant laws through licensing. It is in charge both of technical regulation and price regulation.

Tariffs and cost recovery: UAE citizens receive water free of charge. Foreign residents and commercial users are charged for water. The two public distribution companies receive a government subsidy. In turn, they pay a bulk supply tariff reflecting the full economic cost to ADWEC, which in turn pays for the water received from the private IWPPs under Water and Power Purchase Agreements. Bulk supply tariffs are adjusted by the RSB every four years based on maximum allowable revenues.

Investment and financing

Investment in desalination plants is financed by the private sector through BOO contracts. Investment in water distribution and sewerage infrastructure is financed by the government through subsidies to the respective public companies. Investment in both power and water production and distribution was more than US\$36 billion from 1999 to 2008. Since power and water are produced and distributed by the same companies, separate figures for investment in water infrastructure are not available.

Where Water Comes from on a Cruise Ship

The water on a cruise ship comes from only two places but is gathered in drastically different ways. The ship's water tanks serve roughly 3400 people per trip. That means 3400 daily showers, meals three times a day, dishes, pools and fountains, bottles for drinking and many other things. 3400 people on a ship will need about 200,000 gallons daily for a 5 day voyage at sea. That is a lot of water.

So where does the water on a cruise ship come from? The land and the sea.

Before each trip, ships are stocked according to how many passengers and how long the journey. Water items loaded from ports include bottled and reserves which equal about half the expected 1.4 million gallons. In case of emergencies, this reserve will be rationed until land can be reached. A chunk of this water is also used for heating and cooling the ships many tanks that must stay full at all times.

Reserve water is delivered to the dock on departure day by a chosen company and accounts for only 10% of all water used on board.

So where does the rest of the water on a cruise ship come from? The ocean, of course. While sailing the seven seas, ocean water is collected and run through the ship's filtration systems. After cleaning, it is sent into the tanks, where it can be used for all of the staff and passenger needs, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, sprinkler systems, and drinking. The filtration system is massive and very advanced. It removes more of the contaminants that some government agencies require for public drinking. Cruise ship water is reported to be the healthiest in the world.

Tip:

Never drink water that is not bottled when in port for shopping and tourism. Many people contract illnesses from consuming water in countries who do not have high enough standards.

Some cruise liners provide bottled water for free, while others charge a fee but all of them should allow you to bring your own, provided you do not exceed the weight limit that is set for each passenger. Weight limit? Yes. Each person has a set weight they and their belongings cannot go over. If the ship is too heavy, it will be unsafe to sail.

Did you know one open porthole can let in hundreds of gallons of water per second? For every ton, the ship will sink an inch. Port holes and water tight doors Must be kept tightly closed when in danger of taking on even small amounts of salty ocean water.

The Emirates Palace Hotel has the distinction of being only the second seven-star hotel in the world, next to Burj Al Arab in Dubai. At a cost of \$3bn, the hotel is certainly the most expensive ever built. On November 2005, the Emirates Palace opened its doors for the first time. The hotel is operated by the Kempinski Hotel Group and owned by the government of Abu Dhabi. Emirates Palace employs approximately 2,600 staff, representing about 50 nationalities, with an average of three staff members for every guest. The hotel was built as a superlative for national prestige and not as a profit-making concern, although next to oil, tourism is the largest money spinner in Abu Dhabi. The hotel was constructed to the highest possible standards of luxury and technology.

Emirates Palace features

The Emirates Palace hotel is set in 1,000ha of beautifully landscaped park with palms and fountains, with the architecture reflecting the different landscapes of the desert. There is a 1.3km private beach attached to the hotel. The external architecture boasts 114 impressive domes that rise up to 60m and glisten in the sun, resembling pure gold. "The Emirates Palace was built as a superlative for national prestige." The hotel has a total floor space of 850,000m², with the western and eastern wings containing the guest rooms. It is traditionally richly decorated inside the hotel, dominated by gold and marble combined with state-of-the-art technology. Four restaurants, three bars, lounges and cafes provide a wide range of refreshments and culinary delights – altogether there are 20 different places to eat in the hotel. The complex offers two swimming pools and spas, underground parking for 2,500 vehicles, a marina and a two-helicopter helipad.

Accommodation at the Emirates Palace

The Emirates Palace has 302 grand rooms and 92 suites. The guestrooms include 20 Khaleej suites (110m²), 20 Khaleej deluxe suites (165m²), four Royal Khaleej suites (110m²) and 16 three-bedroom palace suites (680m²). There are three types of Palace suites: Coral (110m²), Pearl (140m²) and Diamond (220m²). The Palace suites can be divided into 48 single-bedroom suites. All of the spacious elegant rooms are furnished to the highest levels of comfort and decorated in warm tones to create a welcoming atmosphere. This level of comfort is matched by the high standard of service, for example, the 24-hour butler service. The Emirates Palace is also the official guest palace of the government of Abu Dhabi, with 22 three-bedroom suites capable of hosting as many heads of state and their entourages. The highest floor has six rulers' suites, which are out of bounds to all except members of UAE royal families.

Luxury features

The Emirates Palace also features luxuries such as 'bath caviar'; \$15,000 cognacs; Kobe beef in its Japanese restaurant Mizona; real Albino caviar (only 6kg produced per year at £30,000 per kilo, of which the hotel has two kilos); and 52in plasma screens in each room; and a 61in LCD in all suites with a touch-screen pad that controls services, from air conditioning to wake-up calls. Rooms are priced from \$5,989 to \$12,251 a night. The hotel also features the Anantara spa, which has seven treatment suites. The hotel has 1.3km private beach, which offers water sport activities and leisure and recreational facilities.

Meeting and conference facilities

The Emirates Palace has 7,000m² space for meetings and conferences, with facilities that include a 20m-high auditorium accommodating up to 1,100 people, a grand ballroom with a total seating capacity for 2,400, 40 meeting rooms with different facilities, and a 10,000m² outdoor function area. The hotel also has a media and business centre. All meeting rooms have sophisticated audiovisual equipment.

Dining at the Emirates Palace

The hotel has several restaurants and bars. Le Vendome Brasserie restaurant, located on the fourth floor of the hotel, offers international buffets. "In the atrium, 22-carat gold leaf covers the inside of the dome." The Sayad restaurant is located on the first floor of the hotel and provides seafood dishes. Mezzaluna restaurant, which is also located on the first floor, offers an Italian menu. The Hakkasan is a Michelin-star Chinese restaurant. Cascades is located along the West Wing adventure pool. Diwan L'Auberge offers traditional Lebanese Cuisine. Anar restaurant offers the regional cuisine. Las Brisas is an open-air restaurant located along the East Wing Relaxation pool and provides salads and grilled food. The Etoiles Abu Dhabi provides offers a combination of fine dining and night entertainment.

Emirates Palace atrium

The Emirates Palace atrium is 60m high, 42m wide and topped with the largest dome in the world. It is decorated with 13 colours of marble, ranging from sunrise yellow to sunset red – to reflect the many different hues of the desert. 22-carat gold leaf covers the inside of the dome, making it the greatest gilded expanse ever created in one building. The entire interior of the hotel is decorated with 86,114ft² (6,000m²) of 22-carat gold leaf.

Contractors, suppliers and construction

Construction of the Emirates Palace began in December 2001. Over 250,000m³ of concrete was used, and it took a work force of approximately 20,000 people three years to complete all phases of the construction. The owner of the hotel is the Abu Dhabi Municipality. The project's architect was Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo. The construction was undertaken by the Arabian Construction Company (ACC), Arabien Construction, Belhasa Construction and Actor Electromech. Project management was the responsibility of Projacs and Turner Construction. Lighting planning was carried out by Wimberly, Allison, Tong & Goo and the DEPA Group, while the lighting (luminaires) were supplied by Bin Moosa Debbas. Control gear was supplied by TridonicAtco. Al Naesar Trading, local partner of Fischer, delivered the resign anchor, the ceiling nails, the bolt anchor and nail plugs for the construction. All staircases in the building were built by FitWell.

Lighting systems

Lighting for the Emirates Palace was designed by Wimberly, Allison, Tong & Goo. Elegant chandeliers, floor-standing lights and table lights are used in the guestrooms and suites to create the right atmosphere, while the corridors and stairways are lit by functional downlights. "The Emirates Palace architect was Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo." As well as design considerations, a major factor in the choice of lighting was its innovative technology. The use of compact fluorescent lamps and PC PRO electronic control gear from TridonicAtco ensures long lamp life and energy efficiency. The luminaires were supplied by Bin Moosa Debbas / Emirates Lighting, a valued customer of Atco Controls Dubai who supplied the PC PRO control gear. A further 3,500 PC PRO units from TridonicAtco were installed for tubular fluorescent lamps in the offices, kitchens and garages.

Architectural features

The design of the hotel incorporates the beauty of traditional Arabian elements such as the 42m-diameter Grand Atrium dome finished in silver and gold glass mosaic tiles, and topped by a 20kg solid golden finial. The colour mirrors the russet, orange and yellow shades of the desert. The building is 1km in length and includes the following: 114 domes, of which the Grand Atrium is higher than the dome of St Peter's Basilica in Rome; the Emirates Palace Archway, which is covered in Italian stone and bigger than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and houses a museum 1,002 Swarovski crystal chandeliers, including some of the world's largest; over one million square feet of marble, imported from Italy, Spain, China, and India; 200 fountains amid 600 acres of exotic park grounds, home to over 8,000 trees, and the hotel's private heliport; 128 kitchens and pantries and 140 elevators; an overall site area in excess of 222.4 acres. Throughout the entire palace, roses abound: in the rooms, in the public areas, in the private spaces – some 20,000 are used every day. Two extensive landscaped pools are located on the grounds, and two spas opened in mid-2006. Throughout the entire palace, roses abound, with 20,000 used every day. Two extensive landscaped pools are located on the grounds, with two spas that opened in mid-2006.

March 17, 2005

ABU DHABI JOURNAL - What \$3 Billion, More or Less, Buys: A Hotel Fit for Kings - By OTTO POHL

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, March 10 - At roughly \$3 billion, the Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi, which just opened to the public, is said to be the most expensive hotel ever built. A billion won't buy what it used to, of course, but three seems to do just fine.

Although it has fewer than 400 rooms, the hotel features 128 kitchens and pantries, 1,002 custom-made Swarovski crystal chandeliers (requiring a full-time staff of 10 just to keep them clean) and what Willy Optekamp, the hotel's general manager, says is the world's largest dome over the lobby.

"Think about coffee," he says, and obviously he has. "We serve coffee on a silver tray with rose petals, crystallized sugar, a linen napkin, marzipan croissants, a bottle of imported water and the coffee. The ladies get a rose."

The hotel has nearly 150,000 cubic yards of imported marble, plans for 20 restaurants and a layout so sprawling - 60 acres of interior space - that the staff will soon be equipped with golf carts to navigate the corridors. "Some of them are over a kilometer long," Mr. Optekamp says. "If a maid goes to lunch, she may never make it back."

While war and civil unrest make headlines elsewhere in the Middle East, a number of small countries rich in oil remain peaceful places primarily consumed with disposing of their enormous surplus of cash, which has multiplied with the rapid increase in world oil prices. The Emirates Palace, owned by the government of Abu Dhabi, is perhaps the ultimate case in point.

The \$3 billion price tag is actually an estimate. But a few hundred million is a rounding error for this tiny emirate: with 92 billion barrels in proven reserves, every time the price of a barrel of oil rises by a dollar, as it has in the last few days, Abu Dhabi could build 30 more of these hotels.

During turndown service, the staff puts a sachet of lavender between the sheets to perfume them. When they are done, they tuck the lavender under the pillows so the fresh scent will waft over the guest at night. The hotel, which is managed by an upscale German hotelier, Kempinski Hotels and Resorts, has bath butlers standing by to prepare one of seven baths listed on the bath menu. If you're prepared to go off menu, you can get your tub filled with champagne for a few thousand dollars.

Pool and beach service includes roving staff members to clean sunglasses, cool guests with soothing sprays of water and supply fruit sticks. Near the milelong private beach, two pools meander for the length of several football fields, interspersed with Jacuzzis.

Rooms, which range from an almost embarrassingly modest \$625 a night to \$13,000 (subject to a 20 percent service charge), come with floors of inlaid marble and soft carpeting. Recessed ceiling lighting almost imperceptibly illuminates a muted color scheme inspired by the desert sands outside.

As with any new enterprise, there are still a few kinks to work out. Connecting doors between many of the suites are not soundproof, leading some early guests to complain about overhearing the neighbors. Staff members still get lost in the maze of hallways, and everyone is looking forward to the delivery of the golf carts, 45 in all.

The chief architect, John Elliott of Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo, a London architectural firm, has considerable experience designing palaces, having done one for the Sultan of Brunei. Since the Emirates Palace was first envisioned as a place where government conferences would be held and only later was expanded into a hotel, Mr. Elliott feels that describing it as the world's most expensive hotel is inappropriate.

"Everybody would be stunned if you said that Buckingham Palace wasn't cost effective," he said.

Six ruler's suites on the top floor of the hotel are to be used only by royalty visiting from other Persian Gulf countries. A special Arc de Triomphe-style entrance is reserved for their motorcades.

Guests are still something of a novelty. In fact, with the hotel only beginning to take reservations, almost all of the people in the lobby are employees. Even when the place is full, staff members will outnumber guests by six to one.

A day after the official opening, Ronald Schröter sat in the lobby cafe, looking stunned. "It's a little crazy, isn't it?" he said, looking for support to his girlfriend. Visiting from Germany on vacation, the two had come to have coffee and a look around. Mr. Schröter, the owner of a sports store, admitted that he had not even bothered to ask about prices. "This is for kings," he said, gazing at the golden ceiling arches.

Rather than the last word in luxury accommodations, however, the Emirates Palace may just be the start of the discussion. Mr. Elliott, the architect, says he is already in secretive talks with several sheiks in the region. "Other rulers have seen the palace," he says, "and they like what they've seen."

Qatar's culture queen - **At 29, Sheikha Mayassa Al Thani is the art world's most powerful woman. Is she using her money well?**
Mar 31st 2012 | DOHA |

THE starkly beautiful Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha, Qatar, is a fine setting for a dinner. Last month 200 dealers, collectors and curators gathered there for the opening of the first showing in the Middle East of work by Takashi Murakami. The hostess of the evening sat laughing with the pony-tailed Japanese artist on her right. On her left was Dakis Joannou, a Greek-Cypriot industrialist and avid collector of the work of Jeff Koons, an American sculptor. Larry Gagosian, whom many regard as the most powerful art dealer in the world, was placed at a table nearby, with the other art dealers. Few people could get away with asking Mr Gagosian to dinner halfway around the globe, only to sit him with the rest of the class. Sheikha Mayassa Al Thani is one. The emir of Qatar's daughter has become one of the most talked-about figures of the international art world: collector, patron, cultural advocate. Mr Gagosian is not the only one who would like to catch her eye.



Until the 1980s Qatar was little more than a sandy backwater. Even its native pearl industry was on its last legs. The discovery of oil and, later, of the third-largest gas reserves in the world have made the pear-shaped peninsula unusually rich. In 2010 its tiny population had the third highest per capita GDP in the world and its economy grew by 16.6%, faster than any other. But even Qatar's oil and gas will one day run out. Transforming the country from a hydrocarbon economy to a knowledge economy in time for the post-oil afterlife is the local mantra. The emir's blueprint, "Qatar National Vision 2030", is leading to new schools and universities (in an area of the capital known as Education City), as well as a post-production centre to service the international film industry, and even a paperless hospital. New museums to showcase Qatar's collections of Islamic art, modernist Arab painting, photography, armour and natural history are all part of the plan.

For the past 50 years the Qatari royal family has been avidly buying art. Well-advised, knowledgeable and said to possess an excellent eye, Sheikh Saud, a cousin of Sheikha Mayassa, sought the very best illuminated manuscripts, carpets, scientific instruments and Mughal jewellery that came on to the market. The extent of his acquisitions finally became clear when the Islamic museum opened in 2008. Designed by I.M. Pei, the MIA is now considered by many to be one of the half-dozen best museums in the world.

At the same time Sheikh Saud's older brother, Sheikh Hassan, was buying 20th-century Arabic painting. Many of the artists were trained in Europe and the 6,000-piece collection at Mathaf, a modern-art museum in Education City, has a derivative feel. For a fledgling nation the paintings are important as an historical record.

Now the call to culture has fallen to a new generation. Sheikha Mayassa was a tomboyish, competitive child, the result, she says, of having two older brothers. Encouraged by her mother, a middle-class Qatari educated in a mixed school in Cairo (who is now a force for education reform), she learned French, English and her native Arabic, and went on to study political science and literature at Duke University in North Carolina.

Two years ago she and her husband, who had both been doing postgraduate work at Columbia University, returned home. Sheikha Mayassa's job, as the head of the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), was to turn Qatar into a cultural powerhouse—a wellspring for exploring what art is and what it means for human beings to create it. "Above all, we want the QMA to be a 'cultural instigator', a catalyst of arts projects worldwide," a trustee says.

Sheikha Mayassa works in a spacious office on the top floor of the MIA. Its walls are lined in pale beech wood, and behind her long desk stretches an array of framed family photographs. Dressed in a black *abaya*, her hair covered, she wears hardly any jewellery other than a childlike bracelet made of coloured thread with a single gold charm, a tiny Arabic coffeepot or *dallah*. It retails for \$82 in the museum shop.

The QMA is a government body, but it remains wholly a family affair. In her first major interview, Sheikha Mayassa explains: "The QMA is very much my father's baby. He wanted to create something...to connect with the community, to create a culture dialogue within society. We report directly to him. The nice thing about my father is that he doesn't interfere in the day-to-day business. We present the strategy, and once he agrees with the strategy and the vision we are given the authority and freedom to go ahead and execute them in the way we think fit."

The QMA is not part of the Culture Ministry, though they do co-operate. The museum agency works with local franchises of foreign universities, such as University College London, on arts administration and museum management. It recruits heavily from abroad, especially at a senior level. The director of the public-arts programme is a Dutchman, Jean-Paul Engelen, who came from Christie's. Edward Dolman, Christie's one-time British chief executive, runs Sheikha Mayassa's office. The director of the MIA is 32-year-old Aisha Al Khater, the first Qatari woman to gain a degree in music. But the four specialist curators below her are all foreign. Two more are about to join them, an expert on manuscripts and another on coins.

The QMA budget is not made public. Decisions on funding and acquisitions are taken by a small group at the top of the organisation. Although she did not say so in her interview, Sheikha Mayassa insists these remain secret for fear their ideas might be stolen by such states as Sharjah or Saudi Arabia. For those outside this inner circle decisions can seem arbitrary and confusing. Two MIA directors left after a relatively short time and earlier this month Wassan al-Khudairi announced that, after just a year as the head of Mathaf, she too was returning to academic life.

Attracting local audiences is a priority, the Sheikha says. The MIA, with its grand, forbidding approach (pictured), is not welcoming to the tens of thousands of migrant workers who flock to Qatar from Pakistan and other parts of South Asia. To help counter that, the QMA aims to open up its museums more to schoolchildren. It also wants to encourage local artists and to commission sculpture and photography by both Qatari and international artists for the new airport that opens in December and the vast new Sidra medical centre that will be finished probably next year. In addition to the Islamic and modern Arabic art museums, which now fall under the QMA, a new interactive museum of sport and the Olympics is slowly taking shape to coincide with Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2022. The biggest project, though, is the construction of a national museum for Qatar, which will open in 2016. Its French architect, Jean Nouvel, has used the local desert rose as a motif for the exterior walls. Twelve interior galleries will tell the 300,000 Qataris their national story, from prehistoric times through to the development of their pearl industry and the discovery of oil and gas, exploring local traditions about the desert, food, fishing, falconry and folklore.

The QMA is very good at borrowing from other museums. The MIA version of the "Gifts of the Sultan" show that started last year in Los Angeles includes objects from Russia's Hermitage museum that the American exhibition did not have. A Qatari version of the British Museum's new "Hajj" show will very likely have objects from the Topkapi Palace museum that were blocked by the Turkish authorities. In response to a British block on taking home two major art works that the QMA bought at auction in London, the Qataris have skilfully negotiated long-term loan agreements with two British museums that will also provide help in training Qatari staff.

Whereas nearby Abu Dhabi is franchising outlets of the Louvre and the Guggenheim, Qatar is growing its own museums. Sheikha Mayassa's use of its Islamic and Orientalist collections to explain the region's history makes sense. Less clear is why she has been buying Western art. Over the past seven years the Al Thani family is estimated to have spent at least \$1 billion on Western painting, sculpture and installations, including the last privately held version of Paul Cezanne's "The Card Players" for over \$250m—a record price for a work of art. That acquisition, which took place in

early 2011 but was reported only last month, is just the latest in a series of purchases that includes some of the very best works made by Francis Bacon, Mark Rothko, Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst, a number of them bought for record prices. Speculation about the Al Thanis' art buying has been fuelled by the family's blank refusal to confirm or deny any of the rumours and its reluctance to clarify whether its acquisitions are private or on behalf of the state—or even to explain how they might benefit Qatar's citizens. Sheikha Mayassa is keen to bring some big names to Doha. A Murakami show at the Palace of Versailles in 2010 led to the Japanese artist's Doha retrospective. Mr Hirst's show at Tate Modern in London, which opens on April 4th and which is costing the QMA more than £2m to sponsor, will give rise next year to a Hirst show in Qatar, another first for the region.

In order for the QMA to be more than a rich girl's plaything, Sheikha Mayassa will have to do better than put expensive foreign baubles on display in her homeland. She needs to be far more innovative and focused in choosing between the hundreds of exhibitions the QMA gets offered. Last year's showing at the MIA of German Baroque from Dresden made no sense. Cai Guo-Qiang's evocative exploration, now at Mathaf, of the ancient links between China and the Gulf is new and original.

An absolute monarchy like Qatar is a hard place in which to encourage the daring, irreverence and subversiveness that is the hallmark of a truly artistic nature. Not everyone in Qatar is persuaded of art's importance. The local blogosphere is full of suggestions that the country would do better with a Formula One racetrack or another football stadium. And the recent sudden announcement that Qatar University would switch to teaching in Arabic instead of English is a sign that conservative nationalists have real power here. In her introduction to the Tate's Hirst catalogue, Sheikha Mayassa writes that "Art—even controversial art—can unlock communication between diverse nations, peoples and histories." The years ahead will test her resolve—Qatar's too.

This is the text of the NYTimes article: 'Qatari Riches Are Buying Art World Influence - By ROBIN POGREBIN

Published: July 22, 2013 - The prices have been record breaking, and startling.

The \$250 million paid for Cézanne's "Card Players" in 2011 is the highest known price for a painting. More than \$70 million for Rothko's "White Center" in 2007, a high-water mark for that artist. More than \$20 million later that year for a Damien Hirst pill cabinet, then a record for a living artist. And \$250 million for Cézanne's "Card Players" in 2011, the highest known price ever paid for a painting. Given the secrecy of the art market, few knew at the time who had laid out such unprecedented sums. But it has become increasingly clear that those masterpieces and many more have been purchased by Qatar, a tiny Persian Gulf country with enormous wealth and cultural ambitions to match: it is buying art at a level never seen before.

"They're the most important buyers of art in the market today," said Patricia G. Hambrecht, the chief business development officer for Phillips auction house. "The amount of money being spent is mind-boggling."

The purchasing is directed through intermediaries by Sheika al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, chairwoman of the Qatar Museums Authority and a sister to Qatar's new emir. At age 30 she has become one of the most influential players in the art world.

No one knows exactly how much Sheika al Mayassa has spent on behalf of her family or the museum authority since she was named chairwoman by her father, the former emir, in 2006. But experts estimate the acquisition budget reaches \$1 billion a year and say the Qataris have used it to secure a host of undisputed modern and contemporary masterpieces by Francis Bacon, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons.

Where all this art will eventually end up remains something of a mystery. But it seems clear that, just as Qatar has used its oil riches to boost its influence in the Middle East with ventures like arming Syrian rebels, its wealth is also being deployed to help the country become a force in the world of culture. This effort to create a first-class contemporary art collection, essentially from scratch, has buoyed the international art market, experts say, and contributed to some of the escalation in prices.

Until Qatar's 2007 purchase, for example, the most expensive Rothko ever sold at auction ("Homage to Matisse") had drawn \$22 million in 2005, less than one-third of the price Qatar paid. In 2011 the \$250 million spent for "Card Players" was four times the highest public price ever paid for a work by that artist.

"When they finish their buying program and withdraw from the market," said David Nash, a New York dealer who spent 35 years as a top executive with Sotheby's, "they will leave a big hole which I don't see anyone else ready to fill at their level."

In recent years the Qatar Museums Authority has created three high-profile museums in the capital, Doha, by the architects Jean Nouvel, I. M. Pei and Jean-François Bodin. But each of these projects — a new home for the National Museum of Qatar now under construction; the Museum of Islamic Art; and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art — is focused on regional art and artists. So experts expect that a good portion of the Western collection being amassed will become part of a new contemporary art institution in the country, though officials have yet to announce that.

The annual acquisition budgets of major museums typically amount to just a small fraction of what Qatar is spending. The Museum of Modern Art, for example, spent \$32 million to acquire art for the fiscal year that ended in June 2012; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, \$39 million.

While other Gulf states like Abu Dhabi and Dubai are also trying to become cultural capitals, those two members of the United Arab Emirates have teamed up with existing institutions — namely the Louvre and the Guggenheim — to establish themselves. Qatar, meanwhile, is going it alone.

"They see themselves as an international center for many cultures," said Allen L. Keiswetter, a scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington. "It establishes them as another reason to be a destination for travel, for business. If you want to attract people, you need to have a reason to go there."

Sheika al Mayassa declined to be interviewed for this article, but she has made limited remarks about the role art will play in Qatar's future. "We are revising ourselves through our cultural institutions and cultural development," she said in a 2010 TED Talk. "Art becomes a very important part of our national identity." In an interview that year with The New York Times, the sheika suggested that establishing art institutions might challenge Western preconceptions about Muslim societies. "My father often says, in order to have peace, we need to first respect each other's cultures," she said. "And people in the West don't understand the Middle East. They come with Bin Laden in their heads."

Sheika al Mayassa appears to combine Western and Muslim influences. Sometimes she dresses like a stylish business executive; sometimes she wears a traditional black abaya, which covers everything but her round face. She speaks French and English as well as Arabic. The sheika does not have a formal background in art history, having studied political science and literature at Duke University in North Carolina. Both she and her husband, Sheik Jassim bin Abdulaziz al-Thani, also did postgraduate work at Columbia University before returning to Qatar.

"The sheika has a very grand vision and is a very educated woman," said Leila Heller, a New York dealer with many Middle Eastern artists. "She wants to make Doha a hub for art in the region, where people don't necessarily have to fly to New York and to Paris and to L.A. to see great shows. Doha has an ambitious plan of opening close to 20 museums of different kinds."

As to the guiding principle behind the buying, art experts say the sheika is simply trying to amass the best of the best, whatever the price. The pace of her purchasing during the past three or four years has vaulted her, many say, to a place among the art world's most powerful figures. She has been written about by publications like Forbes and Vanity Fair; The Economist recently pronounced her "the art world's most powerful woman." And yet her profile within the places where art is bought and sold is all but nonexistent. The sheika does not visit art galleries. She won't be found in the auction room on sale nights among the other major collectors for whom the business is something of a high-society fraternity.

Auction houses and galleries will often wine and dine these collectors before a big sale. Significant works will be flown to their homes. The Qataris don't take part in this. They delegate their purchasing to a handful of experienced art advisers who do it for them — initially the dealers Philippe Ségalot and Franck Giraud and now Guy Bennett. Mr. Bennett, a former co-head of Christie's Impressionist and Modern art department worldwide, is known as a master dealmaker. He is just one of a number of Christie's alumni who have taken on roles with Qatar. In June 2011 Edward Dolman, the auction house's former chairman, was named executive director of the Qatar Museums Authority. Jean-Paul Engelen, the director of public art programs for the authority, is also a Christie's veteran. The Qatar team typically buys from dealers, though some of its most major purchases have been at auction. Experts said that another intermediary may act on Mr. Bennett's behalf so that the sales cannot be traced to the Qataris, who want to keep their buying private to prevent driving up the market and fueling speculation about their plans. "They are very secretive about their purchases and activities in the art market and I am not quite sure why," Mr. Nash said.

American art institutions could be expected to be frustrated to see so many important pieces leaving the United States. But some museum executives say that's just how it goes. "Sure, there are lots of works of art that we have absolutely wanted," said Glenn D. Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art. "But if Rothko and de Kooning and Kline, among others, end up circulating in Moscow, Qatar and Shanghai, that's not so bad — it's a projection of American culture and importance that is meaningful."

A version of this article appeared in print on July 23, 2013, on page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Qatari Riches Are Buying Art World Influence.'

- See more at: <http://gulfartguide.com/nytimes-article-on-sheikha-al-mayassa-of-qatar-and-the-qatari-courts-arts-buying-activities/#sthash.5AIsI8pf.dpuf>

Visiting Dubai on a work trip, I was wandering the resplendent hallways of my a hotel searching for an ATM when a commotion occurred. Some of the hotel staff were scurrying about, looking obviously distressed. I asked one of them if there was any trouble and he responded with a glossy smile. There was no trouble, madam, and was there anything he could help me with? A few hours later, I discovered that there had indeed been trouble. A man – an Indian worker – had jumped from Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, and a symbol of Dubai's prowess. It is a needle-shaped skyscraper which impales the bleak Dubai sky.

Originally known as Burj Dubai, the building was planned during the city's orgiastic construction phase, where the sky was the limit, but completed after the bubble had burst. It was then renamed in honour of Abu Dhabi's ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, who rescued Dubai from its debt crisis. Gossip about the suicide was horrifyingly callous. "It only took 10 months" [after the opening of the hotel], one person said. "He's inaugurated the building," another almost laughed. "Why did he jump?" I asked. People shrugged. He's probably an expatriate worker, I was told – it's usually them. There is nothing remarkable about people being desensitised to suicides. London commuters on the underground can probably understand, but when the suicides are almost exclusively from one minority working in certain jobs, it is nothing short of inhumane. The dark underbelly of Dubai is never far away and sometimes we see the effect of this uglier side lying lifeless on a pavement.

The man, apparently an Indian cleaner who had been denied a holiday, was scraped off the floor on which he landed on and life went back to normal. Tourists and expats lapped up the luxury and sunshine, while workers from south Asia, little moving dots on the facades of the buildings under construction throughout the city, were ferried in buses to and from their living quarters. A couple of days later, another Indian man jumped from Jumeirah Lake Towers. The Indian consulate in Dubai has since revealed that at least two Indian expats commit suicide each week. The consul-general stated that most are blue-collar workers who are either semi-skilled or skilled.

There is something deeply sinister about Dubai luxury, even more so since the local economy went into spectacular decline with the sovereign debt default in 2009. Fawning staff (almost exclusively expatriate) encircle you from the moment you arrive. From handler to driver to receptionist to concierge, the over-the-top attention is underpinned not by a dedication to a superlative service, but by fear. If there is a problem, grovelling apologies are proffered and olive branches extended – all to prevent a complaint that in today's economic climate almost certainly means dismissal or extreme chastisement. People, nationalities and jobs exist in silos, isolated from each other. You can be in Dubai for days and not interact with a local. It seems to me a place where the worst of western capitalism and the worst of Gulf Arab racism meet in a horrible vortex. The most pervasive feeling is of a lack of compassion, where the commoditisation of everything and the disdain for certain nationalities thickens the skin to the tragic plight of fellow human beings.

Psychologically, these workers are isolated and alienated; practically, they are trapped by draconian sponsorship laws in the UAE, and in debt to agents back home. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is such little enforceable employment law in these markets. Such economies have developed so rapidly that social and civic attitudes have not kept pace, and the sponsorship system is open to abuse and still victimises migrant workers throughout the Gulf.

Dubai is considered an emirate under a popular, liberal, benevolent and forward-looking ruling family that has managed to develop the economy and extend its hands to the outside world without compromising its culture or values. Nobody is naive enough to claim that capitalism does not claim casualties and create classes, or that expatriates from the sub-continent have not made happy and relatively lucrative lives in the region, but Dubai's name is becoming stained by the blood of migrant workers.

22 July 2013 - A Norwegian woman at the centre of a Dubai rape case dispute has been pardoned and is free to leave Dubai, she has said. Interior designer Marte Deborah Dalelv, 24, was on a business trip in Dubai when she says she was raped in March. She reported the attack to the police, but was charged with perjury, having extramarital sex and drinking alcohol, receiving a 16-month prison sentence. The case has angered rights groups and the Norwegian authorities. Analysis - **Simon Atkinson** BBC News, Dubai

The fact Ms Dalelv's pardon came within days of an international outcry - and was reportedly ordered personally by Dubai's ruler - is a recognition of how badly this case has reflected on the Gulf state. This is an emirate that doesn't have much oil - instead, tourism is at the centre of its economy. It clocked up 10 million visitors last year and wants to double that by 2020.

And while it sticks by the strict Islamic laws that govern the UAE, Dubai knows that these negative headlines do it no favours. It will be hoping this swift action will limit the damage to its reputation. But the pardoning of Ms Dalelv's alleged rapist as part of the deal which allows her to return to Norway - is already causing a backlash on social media. Ms Dalelv has had her passport returned and was free to leave the country, a Norwegian official told the BBC. She was not being deported, and was expected to return to Norway in the next few days.

The designer, who has been staying at the Norwegian Seamen's Centre in Dubai since she was sentenced last week, told the BBC she found out she was to be freed earlier on Monday during a meeting with public prosecutors.

"We came in and we sat down and they told us 'You've been pardoned'. It's from the ruler of Dubai. It's from him personally so that's - it just feels unbelievable - it's a very, very good day."

Her travel documents had now been returned to her and she was preparing to leave Dubai as soon as possible, Ms Dalelv said.

In Norway, Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide tweeted: "Marte is released! Thanks to everyone who signed up to help."

The Norwegian government said it had been in daily contact with the Dubai authorities through diplomatic and official channels since Ms Dalelv was sentenced - arguing the jail term represented a human rights violation.

Ms Dalelv went public about the sentence last week in a series of interviews.

Ms Dalelv says she was on a night out with colleagues on 6 March when the rape took place.

She reported it to the police, who proceeded to confiscate her passport and seize her money. She was charged four days later on three counts, including having sex outside marriage.

Her alleged attacker, she said, received a 13-month sentence for extramarital sex and alcohol consumption. The man she accused of raping her - a colleague - has also been pardoned, a Norwegian official has said. Despite developing fast as a cosmopolitan tourism destination in recent years, Dubai remains deeply conservative, and its strict laws have caught out foreigners in the past. Public displays of affection and drunkenness are frowned upon.

Posted on Oct 27 2012

A recent article published by Emirates 24/7 indicates that a substantial number of Filipino domestic workers in the UAE currently receive less than minimum wage. **Minimum wage for Filipino domestic workers is set at \$400 per month** but many recruitment agencies advertise positions for DH900 (approximately \$250.00). The brief report features interviews with several domestic workers who explain they are sometimes forced to accept these low (and illegal) offers in order to gain experience, bolstering their resumes for future jobs. However, minimum wage by definition applies to all domestic workers, no matter their skill-set; experienced domestic workers who possess desired skills should be paid more than minimum wage. As appropriate in any occupation, experienced employees should enjoy salaries above minimum wage – they should not be forced to work *towards* a minimum wage. For example, if an employer expects a worker to be particularly savvy with infants or with very modern home appliances, they should expect to pay the worker competitively.

The underpayment of Filipino workers remains prevalent despite the Philippines' and the UAE's public commitments to enforce the minimum wage. Unfortunately, both entities continue to deflect responsibility for this documented contravention of the law. The Filipino government insists that recruitment agencies are responsible for ensuring domestic workers are fairly compensated and properly treated through the duration of their employment. Given the decentralized nature of the sponsorship system, governmental administrations exercise little oversight over the daily conduct of recruitment agencies and employers. However, the delegation of such authority to recruitment agencies and employers has proven deleterious time and time again. The accumulated evidence of the system's failures should precipitate governments to immediately re-appropriate accountability for migrant workers, rather than to direct blame to the institutions they have left willfully unregulated.

The UAE similarly avoids culpability for the enforcement of its own legislation. PR campaigns laud the concerted improvement of working conditions, yet the nation refuses to enforce these ostensible reforms. Migrants do not benefit from the money poured into these campaigns, nor do they benefit significantly from the reactive instances of philanthropy that similarly aim to whitewash the nation's public image. Domestic workers simply need the security of their wages and of their rights, obtainable only through the legal accountability of all relevant parties.

Unfortunately, the blithe attitude of the article's author does not convey the seriousness of these abuses. Migrant Rights previously called upon Shuchita Kapur to reevaluate her trivializing approach to migrant rights, which at times registers as tacit approval of exploitation. We once again applaud Emirates 24/7 for their sustained coverage of migrant worker issues, but encourage the publisher to reassess its presentation of such critical human rights matter.

Dubai's NYE world record: 6 minutes, 400 locations, 100km shoreline, 400,000 fireworks

A sea of trailers packed with 400,000 fireworks are waiting to be anchored into 400 firing positions, which will set off at the stroke of midnight on Dec 31

By Bindu Suresh Rai Published Sunday, December 29, 2013

Tucked away between Atlantis The Palm and Sofitel is Ground Zero, the central nucleus for the night that could go down in history as Dubai attempts to smash yet another Guinness World Record, this time, stealing the title away from Kuwait. The frenzy on the ground is almost contagious, as tentacles of canisters stretch out into the calm Arabian Gulf waters, tiered to a gurgling tug boat; the carrier is poised to make yet another trip to the neighbouring World Islands, which, along with The Palm Jumeirah, will bear witness to the moment when Dubai could break the record for the world's largest fireworks display.

As the countdown to the New Year's Eve night has clocked down to the final three days, over 400,000 firework canisters are making their way to their anchoring points across 400 locations that have been earmarked to pepper 100 kilometres of shoreline over a six-minute spectacle. The current Guinness World Record for the largest display of fireworks ([link - http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records-5000/largest-firework-display](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records-5000/largest-firework-display)) was won last November in Kuwait City, and was set during the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the country's constitution, comprising 77,282 fireworks that were stretched over 5km of seafront and lasted 64 minutes.

Yet, even as Dubai's 360-second extravaganza is mere days away from unfolding, the Guinness World Record itself will be broken within the first minute during Dubai's attempt, with the additional time an added bonus that will light up the night sky like never before, and could very well be visible even from space.

According to Dubai World Record, the team behind the NYE fireworks display, the sea of nearly 50-odd trailers that have taken over key points on The Palm Jumeirah, have culminated from an idea that took root 10 months ago, or merely four months after Kuwait took home the title. World-renowned fireworks technicians and pyrotechnic whizkids from Grucci have been employed for the grand display, with a site tour by **Emirates 24|7** revealing the gamut of exactly how much power 400,000 worth of razzle dazzle can really pack. At one end, while ground staff was busy anchoring some of the trailer beds into place, loaded with the canisters of fireworks, the other side saw floating platoons carrying its precious cargo and readied to be positioned around The Palm Crescent that will double as launch platforms on the night.

The World Islands will also boast its own sparklefest from each of the seven continents, with New York Island from the manmade archipelago transforming into the centre of command on the night, as 100 computers will narrow down the massive display to the final second. The Dubai World Record picked New York Island as a fitting tribute to the fireworks itself, which have been largely manufactured in the US state itself, along with Spain.

While the schematics to unveil the final act of the night remain a closely-guarded secret, what we can reveal is the show will start a few seconds to midnight, with a dazzle of fireworks and pyrotechnics revealing a countdown of numbers in the sky – in both Arabic and English. At the stroke of midnight, a 'sunrise' will be visible in the horizon where The World Islands lay.

A flying falcon, again created by the marriage of the two above-mentioned mediums, will soar upwards from the trunk of The Palm, before GrucciSkyEtching technology will reveal the colours of the UAE flag, presented at 225m wide x 130m high – using a patented PixelBurst technology that uses embedded computer chips for precision firing. At 29,250 square meters, it will be the largest pyrotechnic flag ever presented. Meanwhile, as fireworks will be setting off across the trunk, the fronds and the crescent, seven 24-inch shells will rise 600m above the seven World Island Continents, each spreading a canopy over 700m wide. We can reveal, the fireworks will 'perform' and 'choreographed' to an instrumental piece that has specially been composed for the event. As the final countdown commences for this attempt to go down in history, the Dubai World Record 2014 promises a night that global audiences around the world are least likely to forget.