

# DUBAI • OMAN TODAY

04 November 2011



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**Emirates Dubai Insider**



Daily travel tips  
from EK's New  
Zealand staff

**Kim Sinclair**  
Sales Executive

- With early morning arrivals, there is nothing better to do than head down to Dubai's safe beaches from the Ladies Beach at Jumeirah Beach Park to Jumeirah Beach Residences. Camels walk up and down the beach for visitors to take a ride, or clients can enjoy many of the other activities on offer like skydiving, parasailing or paddle boating.
- Being a keen snow skier I love that I can be swimming at the beach, then a few minutes later can be skiing at Ski Dubai's indoor ski slope in the Mall of the Emirates.
- For clients after a little adventure there's water parks 'Wild Wadi' or 'Aquaventure' at the Atlantis Hotel.
- If clients are Atlantis-bound recommend a visit to 'Coldstone' for an ice-cream treat.
- For a good pub meal and a few drinks, direct clients to Downtown Dubai and the Al Manzil Hotel's NZSAUSSI Bar. Kiwi, South Africans and Aussies frequent this place, the atmosphere is great and the food fantastic.

**EK's Arabian Airpass**

Emirates reintroduced its popular Arabian Airpass this year, offering special rates when travelling to 12 cities in the region with Dubai as the base. The airpass provides excellent value for travellers who want to move around the Middle East or visit another destination while on a stopover, says EK—whether they are in the region for business or leisure. There are handy connections at Dubai to most destinations from EK's four daily services from New Zealand. Fares start from USD55 from Dubai to Doha and Muscat in economy, USD170 business and USD240 first.

**Dubai And Oman:  
Stay A While**



The rise of Arab airlines has opened up the Gulf region to the UK/Europe stopover market, with Dubai particularly popular amongst Kiwi travellers for its ever-evolving array of shopping, attractions and spectacular feats of engineering. In recent times it has become more popular as a destination in itself, with clients opting to stay a week or more, and adding on exotic and easily accessible Oman.

Wholesalers says visitors to Dubai can visit the beaches of Jumeirah, shop up a storm and go snowboarding all in one day—and still have plenty to do during the rest of their stay. "With new operators and increased product, clients are increasingly seeing Dubai as a longer-stay option. A desert stay can be combined with beach parks for a really diverse holiday," says Escape Holidays' Sarah Locke. As the region becomes more well known, discerning Kiwis are increasingly asking for an exotic add-on to their itinerary, and wholesalers agree that Oman is the ideal combination of the unknown, pristine beaches and intriguing history and culture. Home of Sinbad the Sailor and genies, Oman offers visitors a certain mystique and is considered more authentically Arabian.

Oman has undergone a transformation in recent years, as the sultanate sees an influx of visitors. Unaffected by the Arab Spring, Innovative Travel Company's Robyn Galloway says Oman is easily accessible for New Zealanders, who can visit visa-free for 30 days.

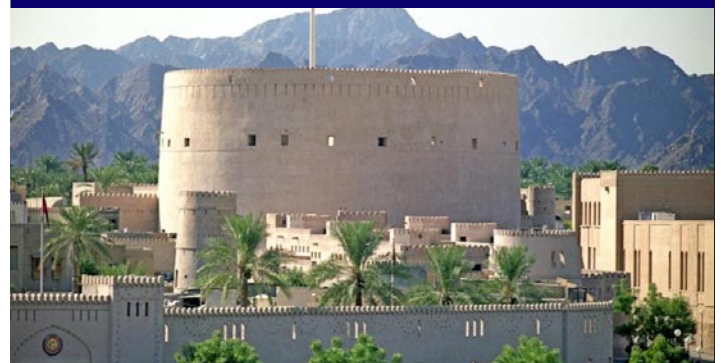
Wholesalers agree that the sultanate is enjoying increased awareness in

the New Zealand market, with new developments combined with its famous white sand beaches and its in-land scenery. "It's a place where clients can enjoy the cultural aspects of the Middle East as opposed to just shopping," says GO Holidays' Asia adventure product executive Emma Robertson.

**Become An Oman Expert**

As Oman is a growth destination, the number of Kiwis who have visited so far remains quite low—meaning those agents who have done so hold a definite advantage over their peers as the Sultanate grows in popularity. To help agents take advantage of this, at the beginning of the year Tourism Oman encouraged agents who have visited Oman in the last four years to list themselves as Oman Experts on its website. Agents can upload a profile of themselves which can be accessed by consumers who search for a specialist by agency name, suburb or postcode. Feedback from agents who have signed up as experts is positive, says Walshe—and those agents should expect to field more and more enquiries as interest in Oman heats up.

**Oman Essentials**  
Brought to you by Oman Tourism



Wander through Nizwa Fort, a stunningly restored example of Omani fort building prowess. It offers commanding views over the district and a Museum providing further insight in to Omani life over the last 1000 years.

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**Emirates Dubai Insider**



*Daily travel tips from EK's New Zealand staff*

**Andrew Bruce**

Sales Executive

- My favourite thing to do in Dubai is the Dune Dinner Safari. It's a fantastic way to visit the vast desert which is just on downtown Dubai's doorstep.
- Clients are picked up from their hotel around 1600 and driven out to the edge of the desert in a big, comfy 4WD. The driver lets air out of the tyres and clients all set for some serious off-roading which is great fun.
- Arriving at a Bedouin encampment just after sunset, a traditional Arabian welcome awaits clients. It's time to experience everything the camp has to offer such as camel rides, temporary henna tattoos or some aromatic shisha.
- Clients can take in some exotic belly dancing and dine on a BBQ of traditional grilled meats, fresh salads and Arabic sweets.
- Drinks such as beer and wine are included so it's great value at NZD119pp, bookable through Emirates.
- It's 'a Dubai must do experience' which clients will thoroughly enjoy.

**Alcohol Reminder**

Tell your clients they can bring one bottle of duty free alcohol with them into Oman at any time of the year except during Ramadan—and at no stage should it be consumed in public. Alcohol is usually available in hotels, resorts and some specially licensed restaurants in the main centres, but further afield a drop may be hard to come by. During the fasting month, no alcohol may be carried by anyone into Oman, and places that usually serve alcohol may withdraw the offer, leaving just hotel minibars.

**Cultural Insights In The Arab Gulf**

Dubai and Oman are two very different destinations—but both offer windows into the Arabian culture and the region's rich history.

Now developed into a significant business hub, Dubai's cutting edge design and western approach may first captivate Kiwi travellers. But a journey to the Heritage Centre in downtown Dubai offers a fantastic insight into Dubai's past, says Innovative Travel's Carol Wisker. "I love to see the old buildings and wind towers, the museum is great and they've even got mock-ups of traditional Dubai settings."

In addition to a number of mosques around the Emirate, wholesalers say another highly recommended cultural option is a visit to the souks. Even if clients aren't keen on shopping, the souks offer an insight into traditional life, and in Dubai clients can catch a water taxi (abra) across the Dubai Creek, for a local experience.

Desert tours ex Dubai to bedouin camps offer a popular insight into traditional life, say wholesalers, combining a 4WD dune adventure, with an evening of Arabian insights. Over in Oman, travellers can get a more rustic cultural experience and interact with the warm Omani people, says the wholesalers.

"There's something quite special about meeting the people. They are very natural and very warm, and hospitable people," says Wisker. The architecture of Oman's forts, castles and villages, some of which are open to the public, offer visitors the chance to immerse themselves in the diverse sultanate. Top picks include the UNESCO World Heritage Bahla Fort and Jabrin Castle.

On a day trip to Nizwa from Muscat, clients can visit the much-photographed mosaic mosque—one of the oldest in the inland oasis city.



"Oman a huge country in comparison to Dubai and a lot of contrasts including landscape and some very traditional and different regions," she adds.

**Respect The Culture**

In both Dubai and Oman clients should be urged to dress to respect the local culture and religion. "Dubai is a modern, cosmopolitan hub, but visitors must still respect the culture and dress modestly," says Innovative Travel's Carol Wisker.

In Oman visitors are more in touch with the local people than in Dubai, and it is more conservative, say wholesalers. However, Wisker says the Omani people are extremely tolerant and welcoming. "You straight away get a warm feel, but clients need to wear garments which are to the knee and in Oman three quarter sleeves," she adds. Women travelling alone tend not to attract unwanted attention, in fact, says Wisker solo women are often afforded a great deal of respect and hospitality.

**Oman Essentials**

Brought to you by Oman Tourism



Experience the remarkable hospitality of the Omani people. Venture out of the main centres and see Bedouin farmers herd goats in the mountains and villagers who use the sun and stars to time their allocation of irrigation from the falaj (canal) systems to water their date palms

**Discover Oman – 9 Nights/10 Days**

**Highlights:** Muscat, Nizwa, quaint mountain villages, Sur, souks, sinkholes, Khasab, Jebel Harim, Salalah, tombs, fishing village of Taqa and much more.

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## Emirates Dubai Insider



Daily travel tips  
from EK's New  
Zealand staff

**Tabitha  
Smith**

Sales Executive

- One of my favourite memories of Dubai was when I had a family of the Atlantis Palm Hotel, (pictured on right). The only way I could describe this hotel would be to compare it to the likes of Disneyland.
- From the moment you walk through the door it feels as though you are entering a children's story book with a glass feature stretching to the ceiling that looks like a fire ball exploding out of the water surrounded by huge clams.
- This hotel has it all from amazing hotel rooms with views over the beach, extensive shopping, a huge aquarium and an adventure water park with thrill seeking slides that take you past the shark tanks.
- You wouldn't think it could get any better but this hotel also has its own dolphin bay which means (for a fee) clients can have their own dolphin experience from hugs and kisses to a famous belly swim holding onto the fin of one of these friendly sea creatures. This man made island is the most amazing hotel that I have ever seen and if you go in low season it can be around USD300 a night which is really worth having a two- night stopover in Dubai.

## Global Village Opens

The Global Village in Dubai is likened to an annual cultural carnival. It brings together diverse customs and cultures—covering a broad spectrum of activities including music, arts and handicrafts, theatre, costumes and cuisine from a variety of different countries. The Global Village opened in Dubai yesterday and stays open through to 03 Mar, and Mon's are family day. See [globalvillage.ae](http://globalvillage.ae)

## A Family Focus



**As Dubai and Oman become increasingly popular with Kiwis, wholesalers are reporting increased demand from the family sector.**

In Dubai there is a growing range of activities and attractions suited to the family market (with particular focus on children's activities). Family-oriented Dubai options range from the Wild Wadi waterpark (with over 20 water rides) and the Wonderland Theme and Water Park to Ski Dubai, an indoor snow slope nestled in the Mall of Emirates.

Dubai also boasts family-friendly cultural activities, such as Bedouin camp evenings and desert camel rides.

On the accommodation front, Escape Holidays' Sara Locke says Dubai's growing apartment product offers family clients an ideal base to explore. Options range from economy, convenience and, for those with younger kids, self-catering she adds.

### ... Interacting In Oman

Oman too is attracting increasing interest from the Kiwi family market, albeit off a small base, say wholesalers. The down-to-earth traditional way of life of the Omani people is ideal for families who can immerse themselves in local communities, giving Kiwi kids the chance to interact with young people in a different cultural setting. Innovative Travel's Carol Wisker says families can explore the natural wonders of Oman for a unique experience, drawing on its rich history—from the stories of Sinbad the sailor, to myths surrounding the existence of genies—to enliven the Omani experience. Oman also boasts a number of resorts which cater to families, such as

Shangri-la's Barr Al Jissah Resort in Muscat, add the wholesalers.

Dubai and Oman's beaches are a huge drawcard for family groups, say wholesalers, with resorts offering a range of family-friendly amenities. The added drawcard of Oman's turtles on their annual egg-laying trips is also said to attract nature-loving family groups.

## Handy Packing Tips

Packing the small essentials goes a long way to making a stress-free Arabian family holiday, says Innovative Travel's Carol Wisker. Her top five recommendations are:

Pack light coloured natural fibre clothing especially pieces for dressing modestly where required; a shawl for ladies is useful for covering shoulders, arms, head, or legs as necessary; take a small light coloured umbrella excellent pop up shelter against sun; comfortable walking shoes essential as the terrain is hot and rugged in places; and a small back pack for water bottle, sun-screen and sun glasses.

## Oman Essentials

Brought to you by Oman Tourism



Oman's many souks (markets) are a window into traditional Omani culture. Stalls sell spices and fragrances such as the famed Salalah frankincense; traditional silver and antique Bedouin jewellery and khanjars (traditional Omani daggers) as well as a variety of artefacts. The two largest souks are the Muttrah and Nizwa souks.

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**Emirates Dubai Insider**



Daily travel tips from Emirates  
New Zealand Staff

**Lynda Tudor** - Sales Executive

- Although Dubai is more than just a shopping Mecca, the shopping is wonderful. Entire days can be spent in a mall as each has its own unique selling point.
- Dubai Mall, the world's largest, has an aquarium, a Olympic ice rink and a gold souk. It's also the entrance point to the Burj Khalifa Observation Desk. The area around Dubai Mall is one of my favourite places to hang out. Every evening there's a spectacular 'dancing fountain display' from 1830. Urge clients to get there early, grab a table at one of the outdoor eateries and watch the show.
- Mall of the Emirates (also great shopping) has a ski field and a cinema complex.
- When clients have finished shopping suggest they head to The Atlantis Hotel on The Palm. They can look at the aquarium, visit the lost chambers, and even go swimming with dolphins.

**Dubai Shopping Festival**

Dubai's annual shopping festival is on 20 Jan-20 Feb in 2012. Big discounts on big brands are complemented by fireworks displays and musical events, providing a dramatic background for a shopping stopover. Events include an Olympic Games for kids, photography exhibitions and an Art Oasis with contemporary art from around the world. Dubai's Summer Surprises is a 10-week shopping festival that offers similar discounts 15 Jun-31 Jul 2012.

**Shopping Highlights**



It's said you get your gold in Dubai and your silver from Oman, however both destinations have more than their fair share of shopping options.

From the Mall of Emirates to Dubai Mall, Dubai is well-known as a shopaholic's dream but if clients are looking for a more traditional shopping experience in Dubai they should head to the spice and gold souk, says Emirates' Lynda Tudor. "The Gold Souk can seem overwhelming when you first go there but it's one of my favourite places to shop and you will experience Arab hospitality - tea, coffee or soft drinks will be offered to you in the stores with no pressure to buy."

The Wafi Centre is a favourite delicatessen, she adds, with best variety of dates and Arabic sweets in the city.

Ibn Batutta mall, themed to the regions Batutta visited, is also worth a visit, while Karama is the area to visit for souvenirs, linens and 'genuine fake'.

For a tailor-made suit, direct clients to Al Satwa. There they can buy fabric and visit the tailors who can tailor-make garments in two days.

**... Omani Treasures**

In keeping with Oman's more traditional appeal, the shopping experience in the sultanate is mainly focused around souks and stalls, selling everything from traditional Omani daggers (khanjars) to frankincense and textiles.

Local Oman Tourism manager Daragh Walshe says one of Oman's more recognised treats is Amouage perfume.

"On a famil earlier in the year, every single agent bought a bottle—it's

called the perfume of the gods," he says. Clients bringing frankincense, or any other spices, can simply declare their goods on arrival in New Zealand. Famous for its silver, Oman's souks are teeming with options, but a particularly good spot, says Walshe, is Ali Baba's Emporium in Muscat's main souk. "It's an absolute treasure trove of silver and antiques," he says.

**Rules On Khanjars**

Adventure World notes that antique khanjars (over 50 years old) may not be exported. It advises clients to check with the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture for the necessary documentation before purchasing. The knives should fit with New Zealand Customs requirements of having a blade less than 10cm, and it's possible to purchase unsharpened examples, adds Innovative Travel.



**Oman Essentials**  
Brought to you by Oman Tourism



Known as the perfume capital of Arabia, the sub-tropical Salalah region is home to abundant Frankincense trees as is one of the cities of antiquities, boasting the ruins of the fortified town Sumharam (Khor Rori) a famous port 100BC-400AD.

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## Emirates Dubai Insider



Daily travel tips  
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### Thomas Rummel

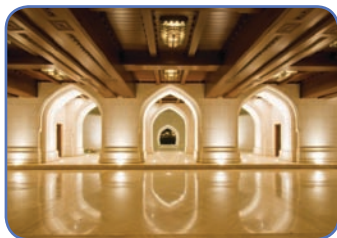
Sales Manager  
South Island

- A 'must do' in Dubai is a trip to the new downtown area dominated by the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. The observation platform 'At The Top' offers breathtaking views of Dubai. If clients pre-book they can get a ticket from AED100pp, well worth it!
- One of the main attractions at the impressive Dubai Mall is the aquarium and kids will love Kidzania, a miniature city built for kids where they can become anything from pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, journalists, fire fighters, doctors and paramedics for the day! Clients can even leave the kids there fully-supervised while they hit the shops.

## Omani Royal Opera

The new state-of-the-art Royal Opera House Muscat opened this month and its grand opening schedule, running to 31 Dec, is expected to attract worldwide attention.

The programme will focus on opera productions, ballet performances and music concerts, says Oman Tourism. The production of two operas, Turandot and Carmen, has been specially commissioned by ROH, while other performances include Don Quixote by the American Ballet Theatre; Swan Lake by the Mariinsky Ballet; and Placido Domingo with the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra.



## Intrepid Incentives

**The intrigue and mystique of Dubai and Oman makes the two destinations an ideal group or incentive proposition for adventurous Kiwi clients.**

Wayne Harris general manager GO Conference & Incentives says the destinations tend to appeal to the high-end C&I market, due to their distance and cost—and recommends shoulder season as the best time for groups travel.

Dubai can cater for all types of MICE clients, whether they want to shop or head into the desert once the day's meetings are over, and the city's hotels are truly geared for business travellers.

"Chopper rides over Dubai are a great way to see the sheer scale of the place," adds Harris.

Heading east to Oman, Muscat is hoping the opening of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre next Dec will help it in its goal of becoming a favoured MICE destination, says wholesaler Excite Holidays.

The centre, which had its foundation stone laid recently, will feature seating capacity for 3000 people, 25,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, banquet and conference halls, hotels, a business park, shopping mall and food court. The highlight will be the convention centre, which will be circular in shape and roofed with a central dome.

Local Tourism Oman representative Darragh Walshe says Oman is already a popular incentive destination, and the opening of the centre should help open it up further for MICE clients who are looking to impress.

"It's a very good destination, par-

ticularly for incentives, because it's unique and it offers something a little bit different," he says.

When Tourism Oman participated in the PAICE show last year it got a great reception, says Walshe. "We had a lot of interest, I've fielded a number of enquiries from industry members with individuals or groups going to Oman, particularly incentive-based," he says.

## Dubai Experts

The Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing's Dubai Experts agent training programme can help consultants build their Dubai knowledge, so they can sell the emirate with confidence. Made up of a series of module's, the self-paced programme is designed to first give consultants foundation knowledge of Dubai's key tourism products, which can then be complemented with specific tips for different markets including families, adventure or romance as part of the Sell Dubai stage. The final stage, Add Dubai, gives agencies the opportunity to differentiate themselves as Dubai Experts, and take advantage of specialist sector training. See [anz.dubaiexperts.com](http://anz.dubaiexperts.com)

## Oman Essentials

Brought to you by Oman Tourism



Take a 4WD adventure over Wahiba Sands, the ultimate sandy four wheel drive playground. The dunes here rise up to 150m and provide the perfect backdrop for sunrises and sunsets in the wilderness.

## Shangri La Barr al Jissah Resort & Spa

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