



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

Applications Now Being Accepted for The National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations'

Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion Program

February 15 - 28, 2012

The National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations is pleased to offer, through its [Joseph J. Malone Fellowship in Arab and Islamic Studies Program](#), the **Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion** study visit to the Sultanate of Oman **February 17-28, 2012**. Fellows are required to participate in and complete a pre-departure orientation in Washington, D.C. to be held on February 15-16. This unique opportunity will provide a privileged first hand exposure to one of the Arab world's most demographically, geographically, and socially diverse countries.

The National Council is currently accepting applications to participate in this study visit. **APPLY NOW!**

[MALONE FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION:](#)

ncusar.org/programs/NCUSAR_Malone_Fellowship_Application.pdf

American professionals in academia, government, the military, non-governmental organizations, business, religious institutions, the media, civic associations, as well as the fine arts, humanities, and the social sciences are invited to apply.

The Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion study visit will provide participants an educational experience that few Westerners and even fewer Americans have had. The program is choreographed to provide Malone Fellows an unparalleled diverse exposure to Oman -- one of the most historically and culturally rich of all Arab and Islamic societies. Until relatively recent times, the Sultanate languished in its status as one of the most forgotten corners of all Arabia. Anyone in doubt about the extraordinary opportunity that being able to visit Oman in this manner presents need only consult any of the several [National Geographic Magazine](#) features on the country in the past two decades.



*End Pictures: inlaid Islamic niches at the Grand Mosque in Oman's Capital Territory;
Middle Pictures: Bedouin Omani girls in the Sharqiyah Sands.*

THE PROGRAM

The program begins in the capital territory centered on the coastal communities of Muscat and Mutrah, where there will be meetings and briefings at the U.S. Embassy, one or more Omani ministries, and visits to sites of historical interest. The remainder of the program unfolds away from the capital in the Sultanate's extraordinarily diverse interior. As we traverse the countryside, we will camp outdoors amid the dunes of the Sharqiyyah Sands, an eastern extension of the Rub' Al-Khali (The Empty Quarter), the world's largest desert. In that region and elsewhere, we will visit remote villages, scale mountains, and stop in far-flung oases for rest, leisure, photography, and shopping for handicrafts, Bedouin jewelry, or antiques.

We will also explore several of the country's famous forts of yesteryear, visit the ancient mud-brick walled settlement of Bahla, designated by UNESCO as one of the Heritages of Humankind, and trek through archaeological ruins. We will visit sites that, not that long ago, housed wealthy merchants who plied their goods throughout the vast Oman-influenced territories stretching from Iraq and Kuwait in the west and north to the east and the south Iranian coast, extending through the Hormuz Strait and along the Sultanate's Batinah coast to the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean, and from there on to Pakistan, South Arabia, and East Africa.

The delegation will also spend time with fisher folk, loom weavers, and clay potters; travel along the country's spectacular littoral fronting the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf; and sail with Arab mariners for the better part of two days on a *dhow*, a traditional wooden handmade Arab vessel to which modern day sailors familiar with the history of navigation and nautical sciences acknowledge an enormous debt.

As we sail north towards the Iranian coast, we'll turn east to circumnavigate the Musandam Peninsula, which straddles the southernmost reaches of the Persian Gulf and the northernmost waters of the Gulf of Oman. We will anchor at sea and sleep overnight in a cove adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important waterway, through which the giant tankers carrying the Gulf region's unmatched production of oil and gas must pass en route to the world's energy-hungry markets and economies.



The Indian Ocean port of Sur, home to many craftsmen of Oman's traditional wooden sailing dhows and its merchant captains of the sea who still sail to and from the Gulf, Africa, and lands east.



Omani Bedouin cameleers traverse the eastern reaches of the Rub' Al-Khali (Empty Quarter), the world's largest desert.



A traditional Arab sailing dhow, fashioned from wood and crafted by hand in the manner of Omani shipwrights and mariners of yesteryear, plies the sea in and out of the Hormuz Strait, the world's most strategically vital waterway.

The delegation will also drop anchor and go ashore at Telegraph Island and one or more additional coastal sites during the journey. Amid the many inlets dominating the Musandum Peninsula, participants will be able to swim and snorkel to their heart's content offshore Telegraph Island, a rugged outcropping of rock that for a brief period was once one of the marvels of mid-19th century British telecommunication. The group will also visit villages atop the peninsula overlooking the fjords of a region that has been aptly termed Arabia's Norway.

Traveling deep into the interior and along the coasts, the delegation will be transported by Omani guides in four-wheel drive all-terrain vehicles. Throughout our time in Oman there will be ample opportunity to photograph and video some of the most stunning scenery and people in all of Arabia.



Potential Omani leaders of tomorrow - schoolboys, their book bags strapped to their backs, returning home from a day's study in Qumzar, a small seaside village tucked into a cove adjacent to the Hormuz Strait.



(L) A Malone Fellow swims in one of the many inlets adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz. (R) Omani desert guides from the Al-Wahibah and Al-Harthy tribes.

ESCORT and GUIDES

The escort for the Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion Program will be Dr. John Duke Anthony, Founding President & CEO of the National Council, who has been a regular visitor to Oman since 1971. Dr. Anthony's publications include [*The Historical and Cultural Dictionary of the Sultanate of Oman and the Emirates of Eastern Arabia*](#); [*Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum*](#); and [*Oman: Girding and Guarding the Gulf*](#). English-speaking Omani guides will accompany the participants throughout this experience and will be able to provide historical background, cultural insight, and field unlimited questions.

COSTS and REQUIREMENTS

The fee for the Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion study visit is \$7,000.00 per person. Commercial tours of similar duration are typically much more expensive and offer far less access to the diversity of Omani geography, life, and culture. When coupled with the privileged availability of official and informal briefings included in the itinerary, this National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations program offers an exceptional opportunity.

The price includes single-occupancy rooms, guides, and meals throughout the program from the time of departure from Washington, D.C. until return to the United States.

There is no direct financial award connected to the Malone Fellows Program. Those selected as "Oman Cultural Immersion Program" participants will automatically be named "Malone Fellows in Arab and Islamic Studies." Fellows and/or their employers are responsible for the \$7,000 study visit fee in addition to a nonreturnable \$100 application fee. These fees must be paid in full to the National Council before final acceptance into the program. The higher actual costs of the program are subsidized by the National Council and its supporters.

All participants are responsible for booking and covering the cost of their own transportation to and from Washington, D.C., as well as two nights' accommodation in D.C. (February 14-15, 2012), as part of the pre-departure orientation.

All participants are required to attend the two-day pre-departure orientation program -- February 15 and 16 -- in Washington, D.C. The orientation provides an extraordinary, in-depth introduction to the history, geography, and geology, as well as the economic, social, and political dynamics of Oman. Leading scholars and diplomats serve as resource specialists for these sessions and provide unique insights based on their personal experiences in Oman. Program alumni have repeatedly commented that, once on the ground, this pre-departure experience has enabled them to encounter the country and its people with a heightened sensitivity to the ongoing impact of the country's past and a sharpened awareness of the present.



Dr. John Duke Anthony and Malone Fellows on a past study visit through the Annual Oman Cultural Immersion Program.



Gold inlaid Quranic calligraphy adorns the inner walls of the Grand Mosque in Oman's Capital Territory.



Omani village pitweavers work their magic in producing one of the multi-colored headdresses worn by Omanis.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE



A panoramic view from atop the centuries-old fort adjacent to the Grand Mosque in Nizwa, historical capital of the former Imamate of Oman located deep in the Sultanate's interior.



H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Bu Sa'id, Sultan of Oman, who marked the 40th anniversary of his rule and of the continuing Omani Renaissance in 2010.



An exterior view of the Grand Mosque in Oman's Capital Territory.

Individuals interested in being selected to participate in the Sixteenth Annual Oman Cultural Immersion Program study visit to the Sultanate of Oman are required to submit a Malone Fellowship Application and supporting documentation to the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations no later than **January 30, 2012**.

The application can be found through the link below or on the National Council's website ncusar.org.

MALONE FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

American professionals in academia, government, the military, non-governmental organizations, business, religious institutions, the media, civic associations, as well as the fine arts, humanities, and the social sciences are invited to apply.

Because a visa is required of all individuals entering Oman, the National Council will need to obtain that documentation for each participant. Once individuals are selected to participate in the study visit, **they will be asked to submit their passports to the National Council's office along with a completed visa application, two (2) passport sized photos, and the U.S. \$ 30.00 visa application fee. Note that that the visa fee must be sent as a money order payable to the "Embassy of Oman"; personal checks are not acceptable.** U.S. passports must be valid for at least six (6) months from the date of departure, with at least two (2) clear visa pages adjacent to each other. **All materials should be assembled and sent by traceable express (USPS, FEDEX, UPS, etc.) delivery to the National Council's Washington offices.**

STUDY VISIT ITINERARY

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING ITINERARY IS ILLUSTRATIVE AND BASED ON THE PROGRAM'S EXPERIENCE SPANNING THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS. Scheduling of official appointments, weather, availability of transportation, museum hours, and the unknown may cause changes in the delegation's itinerary as we travel.

Day 1 - Friday, February 17 - Arrive in Muscat

Arrive at Seeb International Airport (SIA) in the Sultanate's Capital Territory and transfer to hotel.

Day 2 - Saturday, February 18 - Discovering Muscat and U.S. Embassy Briefing

An early visit to the suq (traditional market) in Mutrah where local merchants conduct a brisk business with their daily catch of fish and latest stock of fruits and vegetables. Stroll the panoramic corniche along the Mutrah waterfront with its centuries-old architecture and experience the spirit of a bygone era. Continue on to the traditional suq. There will be time to return to the suq later in the day, but this initial exploration will identify shops to explore at leisure later. Old Muscat includes the Royal Palace flanked by Jalali and Mirani Forts, built in the late sixteenth century during the Portuguese occupation. The Zubair Museum, one of the Sultanate's finest, offers an excellent display of Omani culture, costume, ornamentation, and history.

Return to hotel for lunch and to change clothes.

In the afternoon there will be a briefing at the U.S. Embassy. [Ground rules long-adhered to by previous study visit delegations and much appreciated by everyone involved with these programs will apply. These ground rules will be discussed during the pre-departure orientation program held in Washington, D.C.]

Evening at leisure.

Day 3 - Sunday, February 19 - Exploration of Muscat and Ministry briefings

One or more official briefings with government ministries will be scheduled. Additional visits may include Bayt Al Baranda, a new interactive museum, the Grand Mosque, a Hindu Temple that serves the spiritual and social needs of Oman's long-established Hindu community, Oman's premiere hotel, the Al Bustan Palace, and the *dhow* built by Omani craftsmen in association with the world renowned explorer, Tim Severin, who together with Omani navigators and sailors, re-traced the legendary "Sindbad Voyage" of centuries earlier from Muscat to Canton (Guangzhou), China.

After lunch, the itinerary will include a visit to the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) refinery and Oil Exhibition Center. Sunset cruise and dinner aboard a *dhow*. Return to hotel.

Day 4 - Monday, February 20 - Into the Desert

After breakfast the delegation will depart for the Wahibah Sands, an expanse of undulating ochre and tan dunes reaching heights of up to 200-meters (600-700 feet) with a wide variety of flora and fauna, depending on rainfall. Possible stops along the way include the *dhow* ship building yard in Sur, the tomb of Bibi Mariam near Qalhat (once visited by Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta), Qurayyat to visit the 400-year old fort and fish market, the Bedouin market at Sinaw, and Lizq where steep mountainside steps lead to a Bronze Age ruin, the oldest recorded structure in Oman and all of eastern Arabia. Time permitting another stop may include the old mercantile community, now largely abandoned, of Al-Mansah.

The fellows will then head into the dunes and a Bedouin-style overnight experience at Al Areesh Desert Camp, complete with barbecue dinner, entertainment, and sleeping under the stars. The "camp" is comprised of tents with electricity and two single beds. Showers, basins, and flush toilets are provided for additional comfort.

Day 5 - Tuesday, February 21 - Discovering the "forestland"

Visit oasis farms that produce dates and bananas and then on to the desert woodlands near Kamil, center of the Al-Harthy tribe. Possible visits with Bedouin families to learn about their lives, together with their animals and other means of livelihood, the lives of their forebears, and the hopes they have for their children. Evening at leisure.

Day 6 - Wednesday, February 22 - Into the Interior . . . old capital of Nizwa

Depart in four-wheel drive, all terrain vehicles en route through the Sumail Gap that divides the Hajar Mountains, East and West, first stopping at Fanjah, a prosperous community along the old trade routes to the interior. Further inland along the flanks of the *jabals* (Arabic for "mountains"), stop at Birqat (Arabic for "well") Al-Mawz (Arabic for "bananas"), the "rainbow city," so-called because of the configuration of strata that serves as a backdrop for the locale. Then on to Nizwa, seat of the former Ibadhi Imamate and center of scholarly learning and traditional education, closely linked to historically Ibadhi communities in Algeria, Libya, East Africa, and elsewhere. Visit the *suq* and fortress, see the Grand Mosque, one of the largest and most distinctive in the Sultanate. Break for lunch at a traditional-style Omani restaurant en route. Afternoon visits to the pottery center in Bahla, Bahla Fort (under reconstruction by UNESCO), and Jabrin Castle and Fort, among the best preserved, architecturally stunning and most famous sites in all of Oman. Built in 1670 by an imam of the Ya'aruba dynasty (17th-18th centuries), until the mid-nineteenth century, Jabrin was the seat of a prosperous merchant community linked with the Indian sub-continent and with East Africa. Hotel in Nizwa.



courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries,
The University of Texas at Austin.

Day 7 - Thursday, February 23 - Exploring the Jabals

From Nizwa explore the *jabals* and the *wadis* (dry stream beds) that the mountainous terrain and periodic rainfall create. Visit Al-Hamra to view Hasat bin Sult Rock and its ancient petroglyphs. See the village of Ghul at the outlet of Wadi Nakhul and view the ancient *falaj* system of underground water channels that makes agriculture possible in this area of limited precipitation and small land holdings. Traverse mountain trails to view the summit of Jabal Shams, the highest point in Oman, and for a panoramic view of Wadi Nakhul Gorge, which many American visitors have likened to the Grand Canyon in the United States.

Day 8 - Friday, February 24 - Return to Muscat

Travel from the interior back to Muscat for final explorations, shopping, and a last dinner in the capital city. Possible stops include those places missed on Day 6.

Day 9 - Saturday, February 25 - Travel to Musandam

The Musandam Peninsula is often described as resembling the fjords of Norway with steep, crevice-strewn mountains descending to the sea. This region is separated from the rest of Oman by 70 kilometers (45 miles) and the territory of the United Arab Emirates (as Alaska is separated by Canada from the United States). The furthestmost points of the promontory look out over the Strait of Hormuz, the maritime passageway through which moves much of the world's Gulf-supplied oil and natural gas. While the southern coast of Iran is situated on the far side of the strait, the supertanker routes lie almost entirely in Omani territorial waters as they transit this globally vital geostrategic passage.

Afternoon visit to Wadi Tawi site of a series of Arabia's and humanity's most ancient rock-drawings depicting camels, ships, and warriors. Then drive up to Jabal Harim, the highest point in the Musandam, and down to view Khawr Al-Najd, one of the peninsula's most scenic fjords. Finish the afternoon with a stopover in Khalidyah Park, an Acacia forest that is home to many species of birds and butterflies, before returning to hotel.

Day 10 - Sunday, February 26 - Sailing the Fjords

Sail aboard a *dhow* to Khawr Ash-Sham, the most prominent fjord in the Musandam, stopping at Telegraph Island, for a few years in the 1860s a lone British telecommunications outpost linking London with Bombay by undersea cable. Stop at the village of Sibi and get a feel for its isolated existence. After an on-board lunch and possibly time for a swim and snorkeling, head to Kumzar at the northern extremity of the Musandam directly across the sea from the south shore of Iran. Dinner and overnight aboard the *dhow*.

Day 11 - Monday, February 27 - Return to Khasab

Wake up aboard the *dhow* for return voyage to Khasab. Afternoon exploring Khasab. Dinner and last minute shopping. Pack for return to United States.

Day 12 - Tuesday, February 28 - Travel to Dubai for flight to Washington, D.C.

Drive to Dubai to connect with return flight to Dulles International. From Dulles, participants are responsible for their own onward transportation.

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ncusar.org/programs/NCUSAR_Malone_Fellowship_Application.pdf](https://ncusar.org/programs/NCUSAR_Malone_Fellowship_Application.pdf)**

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