

SALALAH, OMAN

When we arrive in the port of Salalah at 7.30 am it is already in the late 20's C. We have a tour booked today, which will visit several sites around the city. We have been told to cover our arms and legs and that women must wear a scarf. Alvina has to buy one from the Ship's shop. They are doing a good trade today! Our first glimpse of this city shows an industrial landscape, with ships loading stone and fish and there are natural gas power stations, cement factories and fish factories.



As we travel out of the port area we see the outskirts of the city, with 2-4 storey castellated buildings made of the natural sand coloured stone. Some of these buildings have been painted a dazzling white. The city is very clean and modern, we do not see any litter, and there are green oases where grassy roundabouts are constantly watered.

Further out into the suburbs the buildings are mainly small square structures with tin roofs, and there are camels foraging amongst the thorn bushes on the side of the road. A sudden small sandstorm scurries across the verge. After travelling for about 20 minutes on smooth surfaced roads, we start to climb up into the hills. The desert gives way to scrub and then to dried grassland and trees. The monsoon season is over and the vegetation is starting to dry.

The first stop on our tour is to see the tomb of the Prophet Job. There is a strong smell of incense in the air, and we see beautiful bougainvillea bushes and sunbird nests in the trees. A Chameleon appears to pose for the camera.





Back on the air conditioned coach we then travel to the local Souk (market), where we are able to buy souvenirs including the famous Frankincense which is harvested from the trees that grow in the vast desert here. The local people here are very friendly, not pushy at all, and tourism is still in its infancy.



A trip to a Frankincense museum has to be called off because there is a power cut, but our guide takes us to see the local farms with their colourful fruit stalls outside. Produce includes coconuts, bananas and dates. We are also shown the Sultan's palace and a local beach with beautiful white sand.

The last stop is to see a grove of Frankincense trees, where we are shown how this is harvested from the bark of the tree by scratching the surface and collecting the sap. High up in one tree we can see a hive with its busy bees.

This is a beautiful country, unspoilt and with charming people. Maybe we will return one day.

