

Must go

Greek philosophers noted the port of Muscat and it retains its status as a global crossroads into the 21st century, with a polished sophistication that puts it on the must-see list

Nestling at the foot of the Hajar Mountains where the Gulf of Oman opens up into the Arabian Sea, Muscat was first acknowledged as a key trading point between east and west by Ptolemy and Pliny the Elder. Power has regularly passed between indigenous tribes and foreign colonials; the Persians, the Portuguese Empire, the Iberian Union and the Ottoman Empire.

Today, Muscat is a cornerstone port-town in the Gulf of Oman, having revelled in the ascension of rapid infrastructural development that has led to the growth of a vibrant economy and a multi-ethnic society. The economy is dominated by trade, petroleum and porting.

The rocky Western Al Hajar Mountains dominate the city's landscape as its stretches across the Arabian Sea coast, close to the strategic Straits of Hormuz. Low-lying white buildings typify most of Muscat's urban landscape, while the port-district of Muttrah, with its corniche and harbour, form the north-eastern periphery of the city.

STAY

The Chedi Muscat rises amid an elegantly landscaped garden oasis where the mountains meets the Gulf of Oman, with 158 Omani-influenced guestrooms and villas. This central location suits both leisure and business travellers with six distinct restaurants, a 13-suite

Balinese spa, three swimming pools up to 100m in length, a 700-sq.m health club plus two executive meeting rooms.

Grand Hyatt is a 5-star hotel in Muscat situated on a pristine stretch of beach in the Madinat As Saltan Qaboos region, presenting a striking illustration of Arabian architecture. With spectacular gulf views, the lavish 336-sq.m Royal Suite offers two bedrooms with plush king and twin beds, a marble bath with jetted spa tub, sauna and shower, office and butler service on request.

The elegant Crowne Plaza is positioned over the Al Shati Street bridge; a comfortable distance from the hustle and bustle for a more relaxing stay. With six dining options, abundant wellness amenities and business services, everything is here under one roof.

The Chedi Muscat
ghmhotels.com/en/muscat
Muscat Grand Hyatt
hyatt.com/en
Crowne Plaza Muscat
ihg.com/crowneplaza

DRINKS & DINNER

Elegantly curved Omani arches make a dramatic first impression in Chedi's The Restaurant, with a vaulted, crystal chandelier-lit dining room and contemporary cool dark grey terrazzo floors, live piano music and expansive bay windows. Open kitchens provide entertainment and bring forth delectable aromas to hungry diners, as Muscat's finest culinary talents prepare Western, Asian, Middle Eastern and Indian cuisine, paired with an award-winning wine list.

In addition to the elegant dining room, diners can choose between the outdoor patio and eight chic private dining rooms or lounge areas. Every Friday there is a decadent brunch with free flowing champagne.

The Kurkum is an exclusive, modern, fine dining boutique Indian restaurant, located on the Muttrah Corniche, between the main entrance to the Muttrah Souq and Muscat's impressive fort. Alternatively, Al Khiran Kitchen offers diners with a soothing sea view outside and the energy of live-action cooking stations inside.

Buffet-style dining is the focus at this all-day venue with a menu of international cuisines and nightly themed dinners. Guests can dine indoors or on the two-level terrace overlooking a sublime infinity pool.

The Restaurant at Chedi
ghmhotels.com/en/muscat
Kurkum Restaurant
kurkumoman.com
Al Khiran Kitchen
ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/oman

SEE

The areas surrounding Muscat city are diverse in scenery and culturally rich. A haven for water-sports enthusiasts, Omani waters are home to some of the most spectacular marine life the world over. Historic tombs, museums, monuments and forts are easily accessed, and tours to the desert and mountains can be arranged through hotel concierge. Caving, hiking, abseiling in Oman is fantastic. Whether for adventure

or for a relaxing break, Muscat city has much to offer its visitors. Avid golfers can experience some of Muscat's highest quality golf courses, for amateurs and professionals alike.

Tourism Oman
www.omantourism.gov.om
Sea Oman Yacht, Dive and Watersports
seaoman.com
History and Culture
mansultanate.com/culture

Left: Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque
Above: The busy Port of Muscat Market
Below: White marble minaret outside the Grand Mosque

Effective 21st March 2018, the entry visa process and requirements to enter the Sultanate of Oman have been revised. For additional info and to check eligibility, visit evisa.rop.gov.om and follow the new requirements.

