



**OMAN BIRDING TOUR:
ENDEMIC BIRDS OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA**

**03–15 NOVEMBER 2027
03–15 NOVEMBER 2028**



Arabian Babbler is a charismatic species endemic to the Arabian Peninsula.

Overview

Oman is well-known among international birdwatchers, and for good reason. This peaceful country offers some of the best birdwatching in the Arabian Peninsula, with a high diversity of species and many specials possible in a relatively short timeframe. The tour begins in northern Oman, starting in the capital, Muscat, and then travels west into the breathtaking heights of the Al Hajar and Jebel Akhdar mountains, before traveling across Oman's deserts in the Empty Quarter. In stark contrast to the desert, we then explore the diverse and unexpectedly lush habitats around Salalah, the most southerly city in Oman, and end the tour with a pelagic from coastal Mirbat. Throughout the journey, we will target species endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, as well as rare seabirds, and interestingly, African species near the eastern edge of their range, and many European and Asian migrants.

Some of the key targets on this varied tour include the enigmatic **Omani Owl** and **Forbes-Watson's Swift**, along with many species endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, such as **Arabian Partridge**, **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, **Arabian Scops Owl**, **Arabian Eagle-Owl**, **Desert Owl**, **Arabian Green Bee-eater**, **Arabian Babbler**, **Tristram's Starling**, **Arabian Wheatear**, **Hooded Wheatear**, **Arabian Sunbird**, **Yemen Serin**, and **Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak**. We also seek range-restricted species like **Sand Partridge**, **Arabian Warbler**, **Palestine Sunbird**, as well as wintering migrants like **Plain Leaf Warbler** and **Eversmann's Redstart** to name just a few.

During our Oman birding tour, we will explore the foothills and heights of several different mountain ranges, from the rugged Al Hajar and Jebel Akhdar mountains in the north, with their dramatic canyons and ancient terraced farms, to the Dhofar mountains in the south, where mist-covered hills and unique vegetation create a striking change in the scenery. Due to the Khareef monsoon season, the Dhofar slopes are transformed into a lush, green oasis for part of the year, creating a home for a unique bird community of Arabian, African, and Asian species.



Desert Owl is a major tour target which we hope to find in southern Oman.

Away from the mountains and hillsides, we will experience the mesmerizing beauty of Oman's ever-changing deserts, where within oases and alongside towering sand dunes, we will search for desert species like the highly sought monotypic **Grey Hypocolius**, as well as **Sand Partridge**, **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Spotted Sandgrouse**, and **Crowned Sandgrouse**, **Greater Hoopoe-Lark**, **Nile Valley Sunbird**, and **Red-tailed Wheatear**. Along the southern coast, we will explore rich coastal habitats teeming with shorebirds, and embark on a pelagic boat trip out of Mirbat, famous for the abundance of seabirds, where we hope to see range restricted **Socotra Cormorant**, **Saunders's Tern**, **White-cheeked Tern**, **Sooty Gull**, **Persian Shearwater**, and **Jouanin's Petrel**, plus marine mammals such as **Sperm Whale** and **Spinner Dolphin**. Oman has long been a popular eco-tourism destination, which means we can enjoy comfortable accommodations and great food throughout, from charming guesthouses nestled in the mountains to luxurious resorts in the south. This will be an unforgettable birding adventure, offering a chance to experience Oman's incredible wildlife and stunningly diverse landscapes.

Although **Crab-plover**, **Sociable Lapwing**, and **Variable Wheatear** are targets on our Oman birding tour, these species can be tough to find and are all much easier to see in the Dubai area. For those interested, we can arrange a two-day stopover in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to try for these three species, along with the impressive **Pharaoh Eagle-Owl**. Please inquire on booking.



*Endemic **Arabian Sunbirds** are absolutely stunning which we will look for in wooded wadis.*

You can join our **Socotra Birding Tour: Endemic Birds and Dragon Blood Trees** which has been designed to run before and complement this Oman birdwatching tour. On Socotra you will be immersed in an otherworldly landscape filled with unique plants and wildlife, including nine single-island endemics, such as **Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak**, while witnessing some truly breathtaking scenery.

Detailed Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Muscat

This is a non-birding arrival day, with your afternoon arrival at Muscat International Airport ahead of our early start to the Oman birding tour the following morning. We will gather at our comfortable hotel near the airport for an evening welcome dinner.

Overnight: Novotel Muscat, or similar, Muscat



*The beautiful **Arabian Green Bee-eater** is an Arabian Peninsula endemic and should be seen frequently throughout the tour.*

Day 2. Muscat birding

Oman's bustling capital, Muscat, is located in the north along the Arabian Sea coast. It is an ideal starting point for our tour, with productive wetlands on the city's outskirts and easy access to the Al Hajar and Jebel Akhdar Mountains. We will be based here with some early morning birding within Muscat itself, hoping to see **Egyptian Nightjar** soon after dawn. Various sites in the area will be visited such as Al Ansab Lagoons, and Wadi Adai Preserve, where we will look for **Garganey**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Greater Flamingo**, **Pallid Swift**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **White-tailed Lapwing**, **Red-wattled Lapwing**, **Tibetan Sand Plover**, **Greater Sand Plover**, **Kentish Plover**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Temminck's Stint**, **Little Stint**, **Slender-billed Gull**, **Sooty Gull**, **Lesser Crested Tern**, **Greater Crested Tern**, **Squacco Heron**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Arabian Green Bee-eater**, **Indian Roller**, **Delicate Prinia**, **Clamorous Reed Warbler**, **Purple Sunbird**, and **Citrine Wagtail** among many others.

Next, we will then board a short boat trip to Al Fahal island to search for **Sooty Falcons**, which will be preparing to migrate south to spend the winter in Madagascar. Other species we will look out for on the boat trip include **Red-necked Phalarope** and **Red-billed Tropicbird**.

During the afternoon, we will visit arable land around Al Barka, to the north of Muscat, in search of our first open country specials, such as **Cream-colored Courser**, **Namaqua Dove**, **Black-winged Kite**, **Tawny Pipit**, **Desert Wheatear**, **Isabelline Wheatear**, **Red-tailed Wheatear**, and **Striolated Bunting**. Afterwards, we will transfer to our remote guesthouse, nestled in the picturesque village of Hadash, offering breathtaking views of the Al Hajar mountains and surrounding hillside. After some time to relax and enjoy delicious Omani cuisine, there will be a chance for night birding as we begin our quest to find the enigmatic **Omani Owl**, alongside **Pallid Scops Owl**, and **Arabian Eagle-Owl**.

Overnight: Hadash Guest House, or similar, Ghubrah



Plain Leaf Warbler is a short-distance migrant that breeds in Central Asia then winters in a localized area centered around the Gulf of Oman.

Day 3. Birding around Nakhl

Continuing our exploration of northern Oman, we will travel the short distance to the Nakhl area, renowned for its historic forts, impressive waterfalls, and spring blooms of apricot and pomegranate blossoms. Here, under the backdrop of the Al Hajar Mountains, we will explore wadis, oases, and date palm groves in search of Arabian Peninsula endemics, such as **Arabian Green Bee-eater**, **White-spectacled Bulbul**, and **Arabian Babbler**, along with **Little Owl**, **Delicate Prinia**, **Pale Crag Martin**, **Hume's Wheatear**, **Blackstart**, **Purple Sunbird**, **Indian Silverbill**, **Desert Lark**, and the non-native **Grey Francolin**. The orchards, gardens, tamarisk thickets, and acacia savanna in this area provide ideal habitats for wintering **Plain Leaf Warbler**,

Eversmann's Redstart, and **Menetries's Warbler**, which breed in Central Asia during the summer months. While sightings are rare, we will keep our eyes peeled for species like **Black-throated Thrush**, an irruptive vagrant from Russia, and **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, which we hope to see drinking at an oasis. Between birding, we can relax in the comfort of our charming guest house, and in the evening, we will have another opportunity to try for **Omani Owl**, **Pallid Scops Owl**, and **Arabian Eagle-Owl**.

Overnight: Hadash Guest House, or similar, Ghubrah



Streaked Scrub Warbler is a very active species, full of character.

Days 4 and 5. Birding the Jebel Akhdar mountain range

Departing our accommodation early, we will travel southwest to the Jebel Akhdar mountain range, a protected nature reserve, and stunning area renowned for its network of wadis, terraced orchards, and magnificent views. While here, we will spend time at Jebel Shams, the highest mountain in Oman at 9,840 feet (3,000 meters), and visit the Al Nakhur Canyon – so impressive, it is often referred to as the Grand Canyon of Arabia. This area has a mild Mediterranean climate, and the higher altitudes receive more rainfall than much of northern Oman, creating a relatively lush, green landscape. Two of our major targets here are the strikingly plumaged, yet elusive, **Sand Partridge**, and charismatic **Streaked Scrub Warbler**, but the raptors we could see are equally exciting, with **Lappet-faced Vulture**, **Griffon Vulture**, **Egyptian Vulture**, and **Bonelli's Eagle** all possible. The open rocky areas, shrublands, juniper forests, and cultivated areas will be searched for songbirds such as the Arabian subspecies of **Great Grey Shrike**, **Pale Crag Martin**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Desert Lark**, **Red-tailed Wheatear**, and if we are lucky, **Hume's Wheatear**, or **Variable Wheatears**. Our accommodation for two nights is a comfortable hotel, well situated for us to bird the spectacular rocky wadis at night with

ease. These two nights will be our main chance to look for **Pallid Scops Owl** and the rare and mysterious **Omani Owl**, which can be hard to see, but for which we will put all our effort into finding.

Overnight: Golden Tulip Hotel, or similar, Nizwa (two nights)



*Getting close up views of **Egyptian Vulture** in the Jebel Akhdar mountains is a memorable experience!*

Day 6. Oman's Empty Quarter

With an early departure we will leave northern Oman and start our journey south, through Oman's expansive desert region of the Empty Quarter. Today is mostly a travel day as we have a long drive (around four and a half hours) from Nizwa to a remote guesthouse in the desert, but we will make frequent stops as the key birding sites are along the route. We should find the more widespread desert species such as **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** and **Greater Hoopoe-Lark**, plus any number of the species listed as targets for day 7. On arrival at the guesthouse in the afternoon, we check in for a single night then bird the hotel gardens, which serve as a major migrant trap and have previously turned up some interesting vagrants, such as **Hume's Leaf** and **Upcher's Warblers**. In the evening we will drive out into the desert, to look for the beautiful **Egyptian Nightjar** and possibly the localized **Syke's Nightjar**, at a local oasis.

Overnight: Ghaftayn Guest House, Mughshin (please see the "Accommodation" in general information).



Greater Hoopoe-Lark – a unique species that we hope to find in the desert near Mughshin.

Day 7. Oman desert birding

This will be a much-anticipated day as we explore the true desert interior of Oman, focusing on the areas around Mughshin and Mudayy. We have three important stops to make as bird our way south through the desert, eventually ending up in the coastal city of Salalah. We plan to be at the first stop, a desert oasis, just after sunrise, with a packed breakfast. This site is a mecca for both desert and migratory birds alike, being a vital resource in an otherwise hostile environment. Our big targets are **Spotted Sandgrouse** and **Crowned Sandgrouse** which come to drink from the pools in the morning. Aside from the sandgrouse, we will enjoy some relaxed birding around the pools and small stands of scrubs and trees looking for a large number of migratory species, such as **European Nightjar**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Pied Wheatear**, **Bluethroat**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Red-tailed Shrike**, **Isabelline Shrike**, **Rosy Starling**, **Tawny Pipit**, **Tree Pipit**, and **Red-throated Pipit**. Resident species here include **Golden Eagle**, **Great Grey Shrike**, and **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** and we will have our eyes peeled for these too. This is an exciting place to birdwatch as a vast number of migratory species pass through or spend the winter here, including the rare IUCN Critically Endangered **Sociable Lapwing** as well as **Black-throated Thrush**, and **Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin**. While we would be fortunate to encounter any of these three species, we will certainly be looking out for them all.

Once we have had our fill of birding the oasis, we will drive further south, stopping at some irrigated fields for **Cream-colored Courser**, **Pallid Harrier**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Greater Short-toed Lark**, **Bimaculated Lark**, and **Bar-tailed Lark**. After lunch, we will drive to the remote village of Mudayy, a dusty quiet area dominated by date palms. Here we will look for the highly sought-after nomadic **Grey Hypocolius**, near-endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, plus **African Collared Dove**, and the localized **Nile Valley Sunbird**. We aim to arrive at our plush

hotel in coastal Salalah in the early evening, which will be our accommodation for the next four nights. This is likely to be a long day as we will maximize our time in this special landscape, though we will ensure that there is opportunity to rest sufficiently and avoid the hottest part of the day, as far as is possible.

Overnight: Salalah Gardens Hotel, or similar, Salalah



***Grey Hypocolius** are remarkable birds. They are monotypic, have an interesting life strategy (a desert nomad that migrates to follow fruiting date palms), and of course, they are stunning!*

Days 8 and 9. Exploring Salalah

Located in southwest Oman between the Dhofar mountains and Arabian Sea, Salalah is milder than much of Oman, and experiences a monsoon climate, making the region lush and fertile. The area has a mesmerizing, unique feel, reminiscent of the tropical East African coast, yet it is only a short distance from the arid desert landscapes which cover much of Oman. Its location and climate combine to make it one of the most bird-diverse regions in the Arabian Peninsula, with a mix of fascinating Arabian, Asian, and African specials. We use Salalah as our main base for the rest of the trip to explore this diverse and exciting region.

Our birding today will be in stark contrast to the previous days spent exploring the vast openness of shifting sand dunes, as we now immerse ourselves in birding wetlands, wadis and wooded hillsides. We plan to visit several wadis and wetlands on the outskirts of Salalah including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al-Baleed Archaeological park, and the beautiful Ayn Korr Nature Reserve, and we will likely return to the hotel to relax during the hottest part of the day.



*We should see many localized **Rüppell's Weavers** in southern Oman.*



*Characterful **Blackstart** are awesome birds to watch, and are very abundant in southern Oman.*

Throughout the day, we will target several species with restricted global ranges, such as **Abyssinian White-eye**, **Tristram's Starling**, and **Graceful Prinia**, as well as more widespread African species such as **Spotted Thick-knee**, **Spur-winged Lapwing**, **Diederik Cuckoo**, and **African Silverbill**, here at the eastern limit of their range. Other major targets will include migratory waterbirds like **Cotton Pygmy Goose**, **Yellow Bittern**, **Abdim's Stork**, **Small Pratincole**, and **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, though we should also encounter more common species such as **Greater Flamingo**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Purple Heron**, **Indian Pond Heron**, **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Temminck's Stint**, and **Little Stint**. The raptors in this area are interesting too, and we will keep an eye out for **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Steppe Eagle**, **Crested Honey Buzzard**, and **Western Marsh Harrier**. Our afternoon's birding will conclude along the coast west of Salalah, staying until dusk to try for **Desert Owl**, which becomes active just after nightfall.

Overnight: Salalah Gardens Hotel or similar, Salalah (two nights)



The beautiful Arabian Chameleon is only found in Yemen and southwest Oman.

Day 10. Birding the slopes of the Dhofar mountains

With Salalah continuing as our base, we will explore the wooded wadis, dry scrub, and rocky hillsides of the slopes of the Dhofar Mountains to the north and east of the city. We are likely to see a long list of species, but our most important targets in the foothills are three of Oman's most sought-after species, found only here, in Yemen, or Saudi Arabia – **Arabian Partridge**, **Arabian Sunbird**, and **Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak**. Additionally, **Arabian Warbler**, **Rüppell's Weaver**, and **Palestine Sunbird** are also high on our list, being near endemics to the Arabian Peninsula and with a restricted distribution in Africa. Other species to target in the area include **Steppe Eagle**, **Bruce's Green Pigeon**, **Grey-headed Kingfisher**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**,

Eurasian Hoopoe, Singing Bush Lark, Red-tailed Shrike, Isabelline Shrike, Desert Wheatear, Blackstart, African Silverbill, Long-billed Pipit, and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. After another delicious meal, we will go owling, searching for two Arabian endemics. Our main target is **Arabian Scops Owl**, which is much more common in southern Oman compared to northern Oman, and we have another chance for the impressive **Arabian Eagle-Owl**.

Overnight: Salalah Gardens Hotel, or similar, Salalah



*The endemic **Arabian Wheatear** is widespread across Southern Oman's highlands.*

Day 11. Khor Rori and the Sumhuram Archaeological site

Departing our excellent hotel and base at Salalah, we will travel east to explore some higher elevation wadis, with our main destination being the large Wadi Darbat. Here, we have another chance for **Arabian Partridge, Palestine Sunbird, and Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak**, along with several African species including **Bruce's Green Pigeon, Diederik Cuckoo, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Black-crowned Tchagra, African Paradise Flycatcher, and Rüppell's Weaver**. Furthermore, **Arabian Scops Owl** and **Arabian Eagle-Owl** are sometimes seen at day roosts here, so we will watch for what would be a special sighting of these owls.

Following a picnic by the wadi, we will explore Khor Rori area and the ruins of the Sumhuram Archaeological site, which border Wadi Darbat. This area is ideal for open ground species, such as **Bonelli's Eagle, Eurasian Hoopoe, Isabelline Wheatear, Siberian Stonechat, Blackstart, and Striolated Bunting**. The extensive beach and tidal lagoon, where the wadi meets the Arabian Sea, can be productive for wading species and other interesting waterbirds, species such as **Red-knobbed Coot, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, White-winged Tern, and Eurasian Spoonbill**. Our day will likely finish by visiting a site for another Arabian endemic, **Yemen Serin**, and then visit a wooded wadi to see a magnificent stand of **African baobab trees**, which are very rare outside of

Africa. Depending on our previous success over recent days, we may go night birding for **Arabian Scops Owl** and **Arabian Eagle-Owl**. We will overnight in the coastal town of Mirbat, east of Salalah, to position ourselves well for the boat trip the following morning.

Overnight: Wyndham Garden, or similar, Mirbat



*Range restricted **Palestine Sunbirds** are absolutely stunning.*

Day 12. Mirbat pelagic and Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve

For some, this may well be the tour highlight. Early in the morning, we board a boat from Mirbat harbor, an activity renowned among international birders due to the number of rare seabird species possible on this pelagic trip. Our main targets will include species restricted to the Red Sea and northern Indian Ocean, such as **Socotra Cormorant**, **Saunders's Tern**, **White-cheeked Tern**, **Sooty Gull**, **Persian Shearwater**, and **Jouanin's Petrel**. The sheer numbers of seabirds are a delight, and it is not uncommon to encounter large flocks of **Red-necked Phalarope** too. Other species we hope to see include **Bridled Tern**, **Caspian Gull**, **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel**, **Red-billed Tropicbird**, **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, **Masked Booby**, **Brown Booby**, among others, and marine mammals, such as **Sperm Whale**, **Spinner Dolphin**, and **Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin**.

After a great lunch back on dry land, we will explore the mountain steppes of Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve, an area protecting vast expanses of the Dhofar mountains. This reserve is one of the last strongholds of the IUCN Critically Endangered Arabian **Leopard**, an endemic subspecies with fewer than 150 individuals left in the wild. While spotting one would be incredibly rare, the breathtaking views of the mountainous terrain offer plenty of other rewards. Our main avian target here is **Arabian Wheatear**, another species restricted to the Arabian Peninsula, which is seen

regularly in the rocky hillsides in the nature reserve. Other targets include the secretive **Arabian Partridge**, **Fan-tailed Raven**, and a variety of eagles, with **Verreaux's**, **Eastern Imperial**, **Short-toed Snake**, **Steppe**, **Booted**, and **Greater Spotted Eagles** all possible, plus **Rock Hyrax**. On our way back to our relaxing hotel, we visit a stretch of dramatic coastal cliffs, where we hope to see the rarely seen **Forbes-Watson's Swift**, a species with a unique distribution, isolated to coastal habitats in southern Arabia, Socotra, and East Africa. Migratory **Pallid Swift** are much more common this time of year, so we will carefully scan flocks to identify the rarer **Forbes-Watson's Swift**.

Overnight: Wyndham Garden, or similar, Mirbat



*It is brilliant fun getting close views of **Persian Shearwaters** on our Oman pelagic trip.*

Day 13. Tour concludes, departure from Salalah

Our birding this morning will be flexible, dependent on the success of the previous few days. We may choose to revisit one of the areas near Salalah for better views of **Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak** or **Yemen Serin**, for example, or make another attempt at finding the shy **Arabian Partridge**, or rare **Sociable Lapwing**. Alternatively, we might decide to explore new areas to the west of Salalah, where coastal birding could offer a chance to encounter rare migrants such as **African Sacred Ibis**.

After lunch, the tour will conclude at Salalah International Airport. However, those interested in a short two-day stopover in the UAE to try for **Crab-plover**, **Pharaoh Eagle-Owl**, **Sociable Lapwing** and **Variable Wheatear**, will continue to Dubai.

Overnight: Not included



*We hope to see the iconic **Crab-plover** in Oman, but are offering a two-day post tour extension in UAE to give a much better chance of seeing this species.*

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually only slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling and other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	13 days
Group size:	5–8
Dates:	03–15 November 2027 03–15 November 2028
Start:	Muscat International Airport, Muscat, Oman
End:	Salalah International Airport, Salalah, Oman
Prices:	US\$ 7,995 per person sharing – based on 5–8 participants (2027) US\$ 8,490 per person sharing – based on 5–8 participants (2028)
Single supplements:	US\$ 1,260 (2027) US\$ 1,350 (2028)

Price includes:

Expert tour leader and local guides
Meals (from an evening meal on Day 1 until lunch on Day 13)
Accommodation based on two sharing (Day 1 to Day 12, as shown)
All entrance fees to national parks, nature reserves, etc.
All land-based transport and tolls while on tour
Pelagic boat trip
Airport and hotel transfers

Price excludes:

International flights to Muscat International Airport at the start of the tour
International flights from Salalah International Airport at the end of the tour
Visas if required
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing/monument excursions, including the UAE optional excursion
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.
Personal insurance
Gratuities (please see our [Tipping guidelines for birding tours](#))