

NSPCC



TRIP NOTES

**BELIEVE
ACHIEVE
INSPIRE**

**NSPCC OMAN MOUNTAIN TREK
OMAN**

Sat 15 Feb - Fri 21 Feb 2020





In aid of NSPCC

15 Feb - 21 Feb 2020

NSPCC

7 DAYS | OMAN | TOUGH

Raise life-changing funds for the NSPCC as you tackle the rugged Oman Mountain Desert trek for the nation's leading children's charity. This spectacular expedition will offer you a fantastic sense of achievement at the end of this extremely demanding challenge, and provides you with the chance to experience the traditional way of Omani life.

This trek will take you from the coastal town of Dibba, following ancient footpaths between abandoned villages and through wadis, canyons and the dramatic coastline. You'll visit remote villages before climbing into the mountains to reach the summit of Jebel Qihwi at 1,800m. During the days you'll be dwarfed by mountains, carved out through the limestone over millennia. Experience speed boats up the coast, camping in the desert and campfires in secluded bays under the night sky strewn with stars.

It is a truly unique adventure in to the wilderness – you won't see any other trekkers or tourists for days as you explore this beautifully remote region of the world.

- Experience true wilderness as you trek through abandoned canyons
- Discover the mysterious mountains of the Musandam Peninsula
- Visit the Fjords of Arabia
- Just two hours from the vibrant city of Dubai
- Raise vital funds for NSPCC

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 Sat 15 Feb

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International Departure Day from London

Meet the rest of the team and a Charity Challenge representative at the airport for the long-awaited departure to Oman. We have an overnight flight direct to Dubai landing early the following morning and then have a 2 hour bus transfer to the town of Dibba in Oman.

DAY 2 Sun 16 Feb

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Arrival in Oman and acclimatisation

After our overnight flight and bus transfer we will arrive in the coastal town of Dibba at lunchtime. We will have time to freshen up and relax in the plantation camp, surrounded by green date palm trees. In the afternoon we may have the opportunity to visit the local fishermans market and to watch todays catch being brought in on the small boats before local people bid on the catch that has just come ashore.

In the evening our leaders will go through a full safety briefing regarding the trek ahead. It will then be early to bed to prepare for the challenge ahead.

Tonights accommodation is in a 'permanent camp', which means we will be staying in large canvas tents with same-sex dormitory style accommodation.

DAY 3 Mon 17 Feb

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Trek to Smugglers Bay (approx 6 hours)

Our first day sees us leave the town of Dibba and ascend a small wadi to begin our traverse of the spectacular coastline. Below us we pass several small bays as we get our first taste of the difficult, rocky terrain. As we ascend ever upwards we get our first view of smugglers bay, our campsite for tonight, and so called because of the illegal immigrants who used to be smuggled abroad here.

We take lunch at an abandoned village with incredible views along the coast before the long and difficult descent down to smugglers bay. This descent follows the river bed of a wadi, and as such there are numerous large boulders to negotiate.

Upon reaching smugglers bay we will have time to make camp before having the opportunity to snorkel in the clear blue waters.

Dinner and overnight in camp.

DAY 4 Tue 18 Feb

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Trek from Haffa to Salhamdam (8 Hours)

Today we begin with a short boat transfer to the remote fishing village of Haffa, only accessible by boat.

We trek uphill out of the village. Behind us our spectacular views of the fjord from where we just travelled. We then reach the large abandoned village of He'el. This is our first real insight into what life used to be like in this part of Oman. Old stone houses are dotted around between immense walled farm wheat fields.

Leaving the village behind we begin the toughest part of the trek so far. Traversing along an old footpath we soon need to branch off and make our way steeply uphill to join the ridgeline above us. The ascent takes us over the roughest terrain of the entire trek and will be a real challenge for everyone. However, the views when we reach the ridge make all our efforts worthwhile. Our vista will stretch inland across the mountains of the Musandam, and behind us we can linger at the incredible coastline.

Our ascent for today has not finished, however the path to the village of Salhamdam is good and soon we will find ourselves camped amongst the majestic mountains watching the sunset behind the peaks that surround us.

Dinner and overnight at camp.

DAY 5 *Wed 19 Feb*

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Trek to Wadi Shamsi (6 hours)

Our third day of trekking sees us venture further inland amongst the mountains. We begin by ascending away from the settlement of Salhamdam towards another old, abandoned village. The path becomes more broken as we descend into the main Wadi Shamsi that cuts through the Musandam.

Our main challenge for this day is to negotiate the steeper, gorge like, wadi that lies in our path. The old path takes us safely down to the bottom of the gorge before we scramble up the other side and into possibly the most picturesque village yet. In this village we will see an old water channel system and a hauntingly beautiful old cemetery.

One more ascent over broken ground waits for us before we wind our way back down into the main wadi to reach our camp.

Dinner and overnight at camp.

DAY 6 *Thu 20 Feb*

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Trek to the summit of Gebel Qihwi (6 hours)

This day is all uphill as we make our way to our base camp at the foot of Gebel Qihwi. Fortunately the terrain here is far less loose and this makes our ascent along a ridgeline much more bearable. Our total ascent for today is 650m, and there is very little let up in the ascent. Fortunately the views will help fuel us to the village of Aquabat from where we wind our way along a jeep track to arguably the most spectacular part of the trek as we ascend to the summit of Gebel Qihwi (1,800m).

As we turn off the track the ascent gets progressively steeper and rockier until we reach the summit plateau.

After taking in the view, and contemplating our achievement we will take 4x4's back to Dibba in time to relax and celebrate in the Golden Tulip Hotel in Dibba.

Overnight in Golden Tulip Hotel with celebration meal.

Please Note: On the summit of Gebel Qihwi there is an optional scramble onto a small peak next to the summit plateau. This will require the use of a rope and is an optional choice for those who wish. It is not a compulsory part of the route.

DAY 7 *Fri 21 Feb*

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Return coach transfer to Dubai

Our coach transfer will depart from Dibba and return us to Dubai for the flight home.

NB

The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, the strength of the group, and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary; however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

This page provides you details of the costs of your challenge.

SELF FUNDER

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Pay a registration fee of £380.00 when you book

Then a balance of £1615.00 (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise as much as you can for your charity.

MINIMUM SPONSORSHIP

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Registration fee of £380.00 when you book

Raise a minimum of £3295.00 for your charity.

FLEXI

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Registration fee of £380.00 when you book

Then £380.00 towards challenge costs (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise a minimum of £2520.00 for your charity.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Access to UK based training weekends (optional and at additional expense)
- Discount on personal equipment from Outdoorhire, Cotswold Outdoor and Cycle Surgery in the UK
- Access to your own password protected account including support materials and training schedules
- Fundraising advice
- Template press release
- Sponsorship forms (online and hard copy)
- Fitness training notes
- Discount on personal equipment from The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire, Cotswold Outdoor and Nomad Travel Stores
- Risk assessment and emergency management planning
- Public liability insurance
- Access to "ask the expert" re your kit requirements
- A-Z of fundraising ideas

On your challenge

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- International flights to and from the UK (including all known UK air taxes at the time of costing)
- Drinking water on challenge days
- Three meals a day (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)
- Internal road and air transfers as per the itinerary
- All ground staff including English speaking guide, drivers, cooks, and porters
- Full back-up support including first-aid qualified staff and first-aid supplies
- Activity equipment such as bikes, tents and rafts as per the challenge activity
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt
- All challenge management before, during and post event
- Specialist comprehensive travel insurance
- Entrance fees to national parks or other places of interest visited on the itinerary

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Before you go

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On your challenge

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THE DETAILS

Registration fee in instalments

The first instalment of £190.00 is due at the time of booking. The second instalment of £190.00 will automatically be debited from your credit/debit card 31 days after you book. We can only accept payment for your registration fee by instalments if you book and pay online. Please note that when paying your registration fee in instalments, a £10.00 admin fee will be added to your first registration fee payment. Please note that your booking will not be processed (and we will not send an authorisation request to your charity) until we receive the payment for your second instalment. Your place on the challenge will only be held until 31 days from your initial booking. If we are unable to take your second instalment, your booking will be cancelled and normal cancellation terms will apply.

Fundraising deadlines

You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 10 weeks before departure (by 07/12/2019), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 20/03/2020). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.

Prices include all known air taxes

We include ALL known air taxes (including fuel) at the time of costing. Many companies do not include air taxes at all, and clients are therefore hit with a surcharge of three or four hundreds of pounds just before departure. If the air taxes increase between the time of costing and your departure, we will absorb up to £50.00 (depending on the challenge) before passing on any increased costs. Our aim is to provide you with transparent pricing and clear instructions as to what is included in our prices and if applicable what isn't.

Typical group size

The typical group size is 20 - 50 participants

Small group supplement

The costs and sponsorship levels on our website are based on a minimum of 20 participants. We can run this trip with 16-19 people, but there will be a small group supplement of £75.00. This is payable by your charity if you book under the Minimum Sponsorship or Flexi options, and by yourself if you choose the Self Funder option. We will notify you 12 weeks before departure if this is necessary.

Travel insurance

We can provide a comprehensive travel insurance policy for this challenge which provides cover for medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation), cancellation and curtailment and specifically covers the activities undertaken during the challenge. You can take this out when booking. The cost is £81.90.

Level of Difficulty

The Oman Mountain Trek is graded as tough. The trekking route has been designed exclusively for Charity Challenge and offers an incredible 'off the beaten path' experience away from other tourist routes. The terrain is wild, and extremely demanding at times.

During your Oman Mountain Trek you will be:

- Trekking in a very remote mountainous desert environment, following ancient footpaths that are rarely used.
- Negotiating very demanding, rough and rocky terrain.
- Explore unused (and often non-existent) ancient paths around the mountains
- Trekking approximately 12km per day, and ascending over 3000m in total (the maximum height reached is 1,800m).
- Suffering exhausting temperatures during the day and cold at night.
- Camping each night with very basic facilities.

Money

Currency: The Omani monetary unit is the Rial. However the United Arab Emirates Dirham is also widely accepted. For up to date currency exchange, go to: <http://www.xe.com>.

Credit Cards: Most major international credit cards are accepted in Oman. Credit card receipts from stores and restaurants will be priced in Rials although you will be billed in the currency of your own country with the official exchange rate having been taken into consideration. .

Travellers Cheques

Travellers' cheques are not widely accepted outside major cities so cash should also be taken. The best option is to use credit / debit cards at ATM machines.

ATMs: There is an extensive network of ATMs where visitors can use. You should check with your bank before departure that your card can be used overseas and what the charges will be, as UK cash cards are not always accepted by Omani cash machines., It is wise to take sufficient funds in cash for periods away from the major cities.

How much to bring: You will not need large amounts of money during this trip, and other than at the start and end of the challenge, you will be in rural areas away from any foreign exchanges or banks. You will only need money for tips, additional food and drink, gifts and souvenirs.

Tipping: Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approximately US\$10 per person per challenge-day, and this should be given to the

challenge leader at the end of the challenge who will distribute it among the support team, including guides, assistant guides, cooks, and any others staff such as porters.

Visa

UK passport holders do not require a visa to enter the UAE or Oman. However, passports must be valid for at least six months and a photocopy of your passport must be provided to Charity Challenge no later than four weeks' before departure. Tourists will be admitted for a stay of up to 30 days with a stamp in your passport.

Vaccinations

Please check for the latest vaccination advice for Oman here:

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>

If you have further questions then please contact your nearest Travel Clinic.

Charity Challenge cannot provide medical advice for any of our challenges.

Flights

Flights depart London Heathrow and arrive in Dubai on the same day. Flight time is approximately 7 hours including transit times. Your flight tickets will be issued to you upon departure at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance).

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical arrangements (emergency, evacuation and repatriation), cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our [main Q&As page](#).

Group Size

The group size is intended to be around 20-40 people. We will be able to run this challenge for 16-19 people by charging a small group supplement of £75 which will be added to your final balance invoice (self-funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi) unless you would like to pay this yourself.

Climate

The climate is hot. Temperatures can easily be above 30oC with the lowest not dropping below 20oC. Expect to be very hot and sticky.

At night temperatures drop considerably, especially in the mountains, where temperatures can drop below 10oC at night.

Terrain

The terrain on this trek is what makes it so spectacular, yet simultaneously makes it an extraordinarily demanding challenge.

The limestone rocky is extremely hard and tough underfoot and the terrain is undulating through the mountains. A good quality pair of hiking boots are required on this expedition due to the sharp, jagged nature of the rocks and terrain you will be hiking over.

The route of this trek follows ancient footpaths that link abandoned villages. Some of these paths are still walked by locals, whilst others have not been walked in hundreds of years. The knowledge of these paths have been passed from generation to generation. In places the paths are rough and rocky making the trek tough to undertake.

The unique, remoteness of this trek means that there are also small sections of the route that take us away from recognised footpaths and these sections are especially challenging.

Extend your stay in Dubai

Dubai offers you the perfect opportunity to extend your stay a few days and really unwind and celebrate the achievement of the previous few days.

If you would like to extend your trip then we can change your return flight date to suit your itinerary.

Please contact our flights team at flights@charitychallenge.com and let them know about your request as soon as possible.

Please note: On occasions we may not be able to extend your return flight. The earlier you let us know your request then the greater the chance of us being able to meet your request.

We are not able to book any hotels in Dubai for your extension.

Luggage allowance and Valuables

As no formal clothes are needed whilst trekking, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details of what to pack are provided in your Kit List. Your rucksack / soft bag (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 20kgs in weight. On your outward journey, please wear your hiking boots, and carry a spare change of clothing in your

hand luggage. Please ensure you take your sleeping bag and basic trekking & toiletry items on the plane as hand luggage.

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times.

Alcohol

Alcohol is only available in the Golden Tulip Hotel at the end of the challenge.

It is illegal to bring any alcohol into Oman from the UAE. Please refrain from doing this as Charity Challenge cannot be held responsible if you are not granted entry at the Omani border.

Leadership

We employ a number of first aid qualified expedition leaders, all of whom speak English. They will ultimately be responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change for a variety of reasons – unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group, and so on. While we will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary, we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that may occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

Responsible tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our [Responsible Tourism](#) pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Typical Day

You will be woken early each morning at approx. 6:30am, and given a basic but hearty breakfast. After breakfast, you will pack up with the help of all the challenge leaders and begin the first trek of the day for about 3-4 hours. A long and early lunch will be taken to avoid trekking during the hottest part of the day. We set off to walk again for

another 3-4 hours (approx.) and then we establish camp late afternoon for dinner and a well-deserved rest.

Accommodation

You will sleep in shared tents with 1 or 2 other people, which will be supplied to you. These tents are large and spacious 6 man tents. At the end of the trek, you will be staying in a hotel in order to relax and recover this is in Dibba Karsha. Accommodation in the hotel is on a twin share basis. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

Food

Each morning you will be provided with a very filling breakfast of eggs and bread and cheeses along with teas and coffees. Lunch will be a packed lunch, while dinner will vary between Western, Omani fare. Food will always be ample and will provide heaps of energy. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

Clothing and Equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For this challenge, well-worn in boots will be indispensable, particularly coupled with some really good quality walking socks.

The benefits of a comfortable day sack cannot be underestimated, so make sure that you train with this.

Other essentials are technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. We would recommend that you consider lightweight long sleeve tops and trousers, as opposed to t-shirts and shorts, as this provides better protection from the sun.

Walking poles are also recommended, as a preventative as well as for anyone with any pre-existing leg injuries or niggles.

You will need to carry all of your drinking water for the day and so you must come with water bottles and drinking bladders that allow you to carry a minimum of 3 litres.

As this is the desert environment then a wide brimmed sun hat, sunglasses and sun cream are also vital.

A full kit list for this challenge can be found [here](#) and once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold Outdoor.

Toilets

There will be a toilet tent and water supplied for washing. Please keep in mind that water is life in the desert & should therefore be preserved.

Phone and Wifi

You will have a good phone reception while in Dibba at the beginning and end of the trek. On trekking days, there will be some phone signal at some points but do not rely on it.

Wifi is only available in the Golden Tulip Hotel at the end of the challenge.

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of its participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. In a nutshell, Our Challenge Safe brand formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the activity itself. Your welfare is paramount!

In terms of your Oman Mountain Trek Challenge, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- Trekking in the heat of Oman is a major challenge in itself so make sure you are well hydrated throughout. It is compulsory that you have the capacity to carry at least 3 litres of water with you.
- Blisters are very common during this challenge due to the heat of the terrain and the rocks underfoot. Compeed blister plasters and zinc oxide tape are essential.
- The terrain can be very rough and rocky so please make sure that you have suitable boots, not trainers, and make sure that you are comfortable walking on loose, rocky terrain.

Training

A good level of fitness is definitely required for this expedition. Anyone who leads a fairly active and moderately healthy lifestyle should be able to complete the challenge, as long as they train regularly over a period of at least six months leading up to it. Don't forget that the temperature and climate will be different from the UK, and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days.

The most challenging aspect of this challenge is the terrain. Please make sure that your training includes walking over rough and rocky terrain that can be loose in places. The hills of the Lake District, Snowdonia, Wales or the Peak District are perfect for this type of terrain.

In your Charity Challenge account you will find more comprehensive Fitness Training Notes. You can also look to join one of our [training weekends](#).

Training Weekends

We offer superb training weekends across various locations in the UK, from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon. These training weekends not only help you become physically prepared for the challenge, but our experienced instructors and leaders will talk you through your clothing and equipment, camp craft, health and wellbeing, trekking skills (walking on different terrain/at altitude/at night/using walking poles), teamwork on expedition and many more themes designed to make you get the most out of your challenge. The weekends are great ways for you to get out into the mountains of the UK, while also meeting other Charity Challengers and sharing your experiences.

To read more about our training weekends, including dates and prices, check out our [dedicated page](#).

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Any more questions?

Contact us:

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