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## Muscat: the rising star of the Middle East

By [Gena Ng](#)  
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With better-known neighbours such as the United Arab Emirates, it is easy to overlook Oman as a luxury travel destination. But this rising star of the Middle East — with its scenic mountains, deserts, and coasts — is fast becoming a top-class attraction, and its capital Muscat is a lush alternative to the glitzy Abu Dhabi.



The capital of Oman is a treasure trove of spectacular architecture, beautiful coastlines, and vast mountains. (Photo: AFP/Mohammed Mahjoub)

### How to get there

Muscat is easily accessible with daily flights from major cities. [Qatar Airways](#) flies twice daily from Singapore Changi Airport to Qatar's new world-class airport in Doha, Hamad International Airport, for a connecting flight to Muscat International Airport.

### Where to stay

There is an abundance of luxurious hotels in the capital, and the [Intercontinental Muscat Hotel](#) is one of them. The five-star hotel will soon be undergoing extensive refurbishment that is expected to complete in 2017, bringing its guests top-notch amenities and facilities such as a Concierge Lounge, an all-day dining restaurant, and a new lap pool.

### What to see and do

There are endless activities to do and boundless sights to see in Muscat. The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque — inaugurated in 2001 — is one of the capital's most visited site, and was a gift from Sultan Qaboos to Oman to mark his 30-year reign.

Boasting a crystal chandelier and a hand-woven carpet that are among the largest in the world, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is the epitome of opulence and grandeur. It is the only mosque in Oman that is open to all, although children under 10 are not allowed in the prayer halls. Visitors can explore the stunning architecture from Saturday to Thursday, 8am-11am.



The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is the largest mosque in Oman and can take 20,000 worshippers. (Photo: AFP/Mohamad Mahjoub)



The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is home to one of the world's largest crystal chandeliers. (Photo: AFP/David Furst)

The Royal Opera House is also an impressive piece of work. It has held performances by a repertoire of world-renowned acts such as Andrea Bocelli, Renée Fleming, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and is well worth a visit even if you are not catching a performance.

Next to the main building of the Royal Opera House is the Opera Galleria, a luxury shopping haven with an array of high-end boutiques and fine-dining restaurants such as the exquisite Al Angham.

For those wild at heart, head to the Hajar Mountains for some serious hiking. Alternatively, take it gently on a private yacht or a luxurious dhow, rising early for a spot of dolphin and whale watching.



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