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TRAVEL  SERVICE



THE ARABIAN GULF

Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE & Oman

October 28 - November 10, 2022

Escorted by Courtney Stewart, Islamic Art Historian.

Best known for their wealth and abundance of oil, the Gulf States also house some remarkable museums that display magnificent ancient Islamic art, calligraphy, pottery, embroideries and jewelry. This unique tour will visit Bahrain, an archipelago located in the heart of the Gulf that boasts a unique blend of ancient and modern; a destination where glistening skyscrapers share the skyline with majestic, centuries-old mosques. In Qatar, you will saunter around the Old Souq (market) and down to the nearby Dhow Harbor to see some of the Gulf's traditional and distinctive trading vessels and the world-class Islamic Arts Museum. Kuwait, home to the oldest modern art movement in the Arabian Peninsula, contains an impressive number of art galleries. A quick stop in Kuwait City is just enough time to experience its diverse and liberal culture. In the UAE, you will marvel at Abu Dhabi's unique architecture as one of the most futuristic cities in the world. When in Dubai, an emirate that has transformed itself in the last few decades from an obscure pearl-fishing village into one of the world's most important trading hubs and a land of luxuries, you will visit its Old town. Oman is one of Arabia's true gems - a land of rugged coastlines and vast deserts where tradition and progress go hand in hand. This wonderful adventure takes us from the heart of its picturesque capital, deep into its desert.

Ihab Zaki

Managing Director, Spiekermann Travel

Friday, October 28 Arrive in Doha (QATAR)



Upon arrival in Doha (depending on your flight schedule), you'll be met by your guide and transfer to the **Hotel** for check-in and overnight.

Note: Standard check in time at hotel is 3:00 pm.

Saturday, October 29 Doha



You'll begin your full day tour with a visit to **Katara Cultural Village**, an excellent place to experience Qatar's true heritage - from the enormous Greco - Roman amphitheater to its maze of cobble-stone alleyways occupied by young artists practicing their art. Next, you'll visit the **Equestrian Club** to see some of the most beautiful Arabic horses in the world, and then you'll head to the new **National Museum of Qatar** and explore its artifacts. After lunch, you'll head to visit the **Museum of Islamic Art**, one of the Gulf region's newest and most fabulous museums. Continue on with a tour around Souq Waqif - the most traditional of souks that began as a weekend market for local Bedouins selling meat, wool, milk and other staples. Today, this maze of alleyways covers a large area with separate sections selling traditional clothing, perfumes, spices, incense and dried fruit. Also you'll visit the intriguing falcon shop. Return to your **Hotel** for your dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, October 30 Doha to Kuwait (KUWAIT)



Transfer to the airport for your flight to **Kuwait**. Upon arrival, meet and head to Kuwaiti Cuisine Restaurant (Beit Dickson), where you'll have lunch before heading out on a city tour. First, you'll visit **Bait Al-Othman Historic Museum**, dedicated to the history and culture of Kuwait - from the pre-oil era to the present time. Next, you'll pass by the **National Assembly** (Parliament House), **Seif Palace** (Amir's Office), and will stop at the **Grand Mosque** for a photograph. Continue along **Banking Street** to the traditional **Souq of Kuwait**. At around 200 years old, this souk was one of the oldest in Kuwait and was once the center of trade prior to the discovery of oil. Goods sold here include Persian silk carpets, Arabic antiques, perfumes, fruits, meats, jewelry, and traditional clothing. From here, you'll head down to the **Dhow Harbor** and **Fish Market** - an excellent place to take photos. Afterwards, we'll drive back to the **Kuwait Towers** and ascend almost 400 feet to the viewing sphere for a picturesque view of the city and coastline. Transfer to the **Hotel** for check in dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, October 31 Kuwait



You'll begin your day with a visit to the privately owned **Tareq Rajab Museum**, which houses a collection of over 30,000 items collected over the last 50 years, of which approximately 10,000 are on permanent display. Then we'll depart for a local lunch followed by a visit to the **Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center**, owned by the Amiri Diwan & consists of 6 components, which are Natural History Museum, Science Museum, Space Museum, Arabic Islamic Science Museum, Fine Arts Museum, etc. Afterwards, we'll take a drive to visit Dar al Athar al-Islamiyya before returning to the **Hotel** for dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, November 01 Kuwait to Manama (BAHRAIN)



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your morning flight to Manama. Upon arrival, you'll meet your guide and driver and begin your city tour with a visit to the **Old Palace** and the **Guest Palace**, located in the **Gudaibiya area of Manama**. From here, you'll proceed to the island of **Muharraq**, where you'll visit **Shaikh Isa House**, a fine example of a 19th century Arabian residence and close by is the 15th century **Arad Fort**, built in typical period style and occupied by the Portuguese for 100 years. Next, you'll have the opportunity to savor the finest Arabic sweets and pastries at a typical **Arabic confectionery**. After lunch, you'll visit the **Bahrain Fort** ruins, built by the Portuguese in the 16th century and its museum. You'll visit the **House of Qur'an**, where you'll see rare and precious collections of ancient Quranic manuscripts as well as Islamic works of art. Transfer to the **Hotel** for check in dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, November 02 Manama



You'll begin your day with a visit to the **Al Fateh Grand Mosque**, a magnificent piece of architecture. Next, you'll visit **Saar**, where a 3900 BC town is being excavated and then you'll pass by **Al Jasra House**, birthplace of the Amir. You'll stop at the Al Jasra Handicraft Centre, where you'll meet locals displaying their crafts. You'll pass by the site of 5,000-year-old burial mounds on your back to the **Hotel** for your dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, November 03 Manama (Bahrain)-Dubai (UAE)



Transfer to the airport for your flight to Dubai. Upon arrival you'll have the morning free at leisure to either explore the famous malls or the old souks for shopping. After lunch, you'll explore the "City of Gold", stopping first to take a photo of the

city's famous landmark - **Burj Al Arab Hotel** (Jumeirah Beach side) and the magnificent **Jumeirah Mosque**. Afterwards, you'll head to the oldest part of the city, **Bastakia**, where old wind-towered houses of wealthy merchants can still be seen. Nearby is the 18th century **Dubai Museum**, housed in the **Al Fahidi Fort**, the oldest existing structure in Dubai. Continue your way through the **cloth markets** to the **Abras** - local water taxis that will take you across the Creek to the **spice and gold souks**. You'll walk through the bustling alleys of these souks and allow the mystical aromas of numerous spices to tantalize your senses, while the breath-taking amount of brilliant gold will dazzle your eyes. Another outstanding experience is a visit to the world's tallest structure - Burj Khalifa. No building in modern history has aroused so much curiosity and intrigue as **Burj Khalifa** has. As you make the journey to the "At the Top" observation deck, enjoy a multi-media presentation of the exotic history of Dubai and Burj Khalifa. From the observation deck, you'll have a spectacular view of Dubai. When you return to the ground level, you'll stop to take a photo of **Dubai Fountain**, the largest choreographed fountain system in the world. Afterward, you'll head to **Dubai Creek** for a lovely **Dhow Cruise Dinner** and the chance to see the modern skyline of Dubai from the Creek. Return to the **Hotel** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, November 04 Dubai - Abu-Dhabi



After breakfast we drive to Abu-Dhabi. Upon arrival we start our city tour with a visit to **Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque**, the largest mosque in the country. Next, you'll stop to take a photo of the **Emirates Palace** a famous landmark of Abu Dhabi, the spectacular **Etiihad Towers**, and the **Corniche**, a five mile stretch that runs along the coast. You'll then visit the 18th century **Qasr Al Hosn Fort (White Fort)**, the oldest stone structure in Abu Dhabi, followed by a stop at the **dates market** where you'll learn about the variety of dates grown across the Middle East. Your tour ends with a visit to the **Louvre Museum**, the largest art museum in the Arabian Peninsula displaying artwork from around the world. Transfer to the **Hotel** for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 05 Abu Dhabi-Al Ain



After breakfast, we'll drive to **Al Ain** - the "Garden City" of the UAE and one of the oldest settlements. This green city oases features tree-line avenues and contains an incredible number of public parks. You'll visit **Al Ain Museum**, which houses artifacts from ancient times that have been discovered in and around the city, as well as, ancient Arabic manuscripts and royal treasures. Next, you'll stop at the traditional **camel market** for an up-close look at these "ships of desert". You'll explore **Hili Gardens**, the excavation site of a tomb that dates back to 3000 B.C., as well as, other archaeological discoveries. Later we visit the superb photographic exhibition about **Wilfred Thesiger** located in **Al Jahili Fort**, now a cultural center. Proceed to the **Hotel** to check-in, dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, November 06 Al Ain- Ibri- Nizwa (Oman)



After breakfast, drive from Al Ain border to change vehicles, cross the border and enter the Sultanate of Oman. Stop at **Ibri** to visit the **Beehive Tombs** and the **Necropolis at Bat**, a prototype historic site from the 3rd millennium BCE. Stop for lunch at a local restaurant before touring the magnificent **Jabreen Castle** (1675)

in Bahla, one of the finest castles in Oman. Photo-stop at **Bahla Fort** (UNESCO Site) then proceed to **Nizwa** and transfer to the **Hotel**, check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, November 07 Nizwa to Wahiba Sand



You'll begin the day with a stop at **Mudhaybi**, the site of an ancient civilization that dates back to 2500-2000 BC. Continue on to **Munziff in Ibra Village**, one of the oldest cities in Oman, for a traditional lunch. This village was once the center for trade, religion, education, and art and is home to the Al Harthy, Al Maskary, and Al Riyami tribes. After lunch, depart for **Wahiba Sands**, along a narrow strip of high dunes, through sketchy woodland, and along the unspoiled coastline of eastern Oman. To the north of Wahiba Sands are the most incredible sand dunes, some reaching a colossal 300 feet high and separated by enormous depressions. Wahiba Sands is also home to local Bedouins, and you'll have the opportunity to visit a **Bedouin house**. Transfer to **Desert Night Camp** for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, November 08 Muscat to USA



Today, we'll check-out of the camp (9:00am) and drive to **Wadi Bani Khalid**, across the eastern Al Hajar Mountains to **Bida Village** deep in the mountains. From here, there are spectacular views of the fertile valley with its extended trees and abundance of water that tumbles down like a waterfall. Enjoy some leisure time at Wadi Bani Khalid, which stands out like an oasis in the desert, with clear green natural spring water pools and abundance of greenery. Enjoy a walk through the wadi and admire its natural surroundings and you can take a short dip in the natural oasis if you want to. From here, we'll drive to Sur, the capital city of the Ash Sharqiyah region and once an important center for trade with East Africa and India, where you'll see the **lighthouse** and the **old merchant houses** to admire the details of the intricately carved wooden doors. Also stop at the **Dhow Yard** (granting permission) to see the dhows, trading vessels primarily used to transport heavy items. Continue the drive to **Wadi Tiwi**, where you'll take a walk through an old traditional village full of lush banana and papaya plantations as your guide explains the complete cultivation process. On your way to Muscat, stop to see the **Bima Sinkhole**, a spectacular limestone crater with blue green water at the bottom. Upon arrival in Muscat if the time and enthusiasm will allow we will visit The National Museum of Oman. Transfer to the **Hotel** for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, November 09 Muscat



After breakfast, visit the **Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque**, a scientific and intellectual resource of knowledge across the Islamic world. After visiting the **Royal Opera House**, explore the **Muttrah Souq**, a vibrant collection of colorful stalls filled with textiles and spices and antiques. Discover the Sultanate's rich history and heritage with a visit to the **National Museum of Oman**. After visiting the museum, make a brief photo stop outside the ceremonial **Al Alam Palace** and the adjacent former 16th c. Portuguese defense forts of **Al Jalali and Mirani**. Return the **Hotel**, dinner, overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, November 10 Muscat to USA



Enjoy your breakfast and then transfer to the Airport for your flight back home. **(B)**

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts or in order to make the itinerary run smoothly"



About your lecturer...Courtney Stewart, Courtney is a Senior Researcher, Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, NY since 2010. She has contributed to the re installation of the new galleries of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia (2011), as well as the exhibitions and publications Treasures from India: Jewels from the Al-Thani Collection (2014) and Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy (2015). Courtney

has taught courses on Islamic art history at the University of Toronto, and continues to lecture in the School of Continuing Studies at New York University. She holds graduate degrees from the University of Toronto and the Bard Graduate Center, and is currently pursuing research on the history of Islamic jewelry.

Tour cost (land only): \$7,650.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$1,495.00

Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: II

Lodging Level: *-******

Tour includes:

- Arrival & departure transfer in a private A/C car
- 13 nights in Superior (4*) accommodations in centrally located hotels with breakfast.
- Travel by modern, air-conditioned van or minibus.
- Meals as specified in the itinerary.
- Entrance fees to all sites & museums mentioned.
- Lecturer throughout the trip
- English Speaking local guides in each country for all your mentioned tours and visits.
- All activities described in the tour.

Trip Grade:

II Active – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives.

Lodging Level:

***** Superior** – Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

****** Luxury** – Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars).

Special Notes on Travel:

Active Touring - You will be covering a lot during this journey. The roads are good, and the bus is very comfortable. Some driving days are long, but there will be several restroom stops along the way. It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some of the long sightseeing days, as well as, some of the site visits where you may have to climb over uneven terrain, steps, rocks and sand, as well as, up inclines and stairs. Be prepared to travel with comfortable shoes. You do have the option of staying in the vehicle if some sites seem difficult to you.

Note on Visas:

Your passport must be valid for at least six months after the end of your tour, and it must have at least three blank pages for visas.

Qatar Visa: US visitors are eligible for visa-free entry into the State of Qatar and can obtain a visa waiver upon presentation of a valid passport with a minimum validity of six months and a confirmed onward or return ticket. The waiver will be valid for 30 days from the date of issuance.

Bahrain Visa: It is obtainable upon arrival, and it costs (BHD 25 equivalent to approx. \$66) to be paid at the airport on arrival OR you can apply in advance for an e-visa through this web site: <http://www.evisa.gov.bh/VisaBhr3En.html>

Kuwait Visa: Please note that it is pre-arranged, no additional visa fee will be collected and will be upon arrival.

UAE Visa: Does not require a visa for US citizens to enter.

Oman Visa: All nationalities need to apply for the visa in advance through www.evisa.rop.gov.om

Tour does not include:

- International airfare & Doha/Kuwait/Bahrain/Abu Dhabi, Dubai/Muscat flights.
- All visas currently obtainable on arrival. UAE (**free**), Qatar (**free**), Bahrain (**\$66.00**), Kuwait (**free**) and Oman (**60**) (**online**) - **All subject to change.**
- Dayroom or extra hotel nights necessitated by airline flight schedule changes.
- Airport transfers if not arriving/departing on trip dates.
- Expenses of a personal nature such as: beverages with meals, telephone, camera fees, laundry, etc.
- Travel Insurance (**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**).

