Oman’s underwater kaleidoscope

- Beirut - Melting pot of cultures
- Omani Weddings
- On the Sindbad trail
- Acupuncture
Dear Passenger,

With summer setting in and people gearing up to embark on holidays, Oman Air terrains in with an increase in number of flights and the Arabian Travel Market, held in Dubai between May 2 and May 5, provided an ideal marketing opportunity to enhance Oman’s tourism potential, at a time when people are planning their holiday itineraries.

From 1st May 2006, Oman Air originated its summer schedule with an increase in the number of flights to various destinations in the Middle East. Daily flights are being operated to Beirut, Bahrain and Doha, while Cairo and Kuwait witnessed an increase of 5 and 14 weekly flights, respectively. In addition, the Dubai sector has been increased to 44 weekly flights from 27 weekly flights making the total departures out of Muscat up to 124 flights per week.

Also, with the Khareef Season on the threshold, the increase in the number of frequencies and connections, will boast a positive impact on the tourist activities, besides facilitating the commercial and industrial segment as well.

Oman made its presence felt in the Arabian Travel Market thus ensuring, that Oman is marked on the tourism map of the world. The objective was using the event as a platform to unfold our services, including tour packages to destinations on Oman Air’s network and promote the alluring tourist attractions in Oman.

This issue, as always, is packed with an impressive line-up of features. Abreast of the fact that adventure tourism is fast catching up, Oman is making a good move in this direction. Marine tourism is one such area where Oman can deliver well considering its great potential. The feature on diving in Oman will entice any reader to plumb the depths of Oman’s waters to explore the bewitching coral reefs.

To savour a slice of Oman’s maritime history the feature on Sindbad makes for interesting reading. An overview of Beirut gives you a peek into the many attractions of the bustling city. On the cultural front, we have focused our lenses on Omani weddings. To beat the heat we recommend a splash in the cool waters of Wadi Bani Khalid set amidst pristine foliage. Besides, there are interesting articles on acupuncture, platinum, business, etc.

Have a pleasurable flight with friends.

Sincerely,

Ziad Karim Al Haremi
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Cover Story

12 Oman’s underwater kaleidoscope
If you want to beat the summer heat with some real adventure, then diving options in Oman have something to offer.

16 Beirut - Melting pot of cultures
Cosmopolitan Beirut, with its million plus denizens, conveys a sense of life and an energy that is immediately apparent.

22 Wadi Bani Khalid
Take time off from your busy schedule to relax body, mind and spirit, to let Nature heal and correct the imbalances of a mechanical life. Wadi Bani Khalid does just that.

26 Omani Weddings
In Oman ceremonies vary from one region to another according to tribal habits, religious beliefs and status. Weddings are considered great family and community affairs and ceremonies usually take between three to seven days.

30 On the Sindbad trail
Oman is referred to as the land of Sindbad. Scholars said that the fables spun around Sindbad may have been versions of actual exploits and gave examples.
Alternative treatment: Acupuncture

Acupuncture is based on the belief that the stimulation of specific areas affects the functioning of certain organs of the body, and has evolved into a system of medicine that restores and maintains health by the insertion of fine needles into acupuncture points just beneath the skin’s surface.

Seven steps to Successful Managing

Being a manager is one thing, but becoming a superlative manager requires a little more effort, which raises you over the level of the ordinary.

Precious Platinum

Platinum is precious but not pretentious. The metal is a real treat for jewellery connoisseurs.
Oman Air has participated in the 13th Arabian Travel Market (ATM) held in Dubai during the period from 2 - 5 May 2006. The ATM, one of the biggest tourism and travel exhibitions, has achieved remarkable growth with relation to the number of visitors participating from different parts of the world, which provide evidence, of its prestigious status worldwide. This year’s assembly witnessed significant new activities, and the signing of numerous imperative deals up to the last day.

Commenting on the participation, Mr. Usama Bin Karim Al Haremi, Manager Corporate Communications and Media said, “Our participation this year was successful and prolific. Oman Air’s stand and the Boeing flight simulator attracted vast numbers of visitors. The objective was using the event as a platform to unfold our new services, including tour packages to destinations on our network, also promote the unmatched tourist attractions in Oman. It initiated our products and packages to inbound and outbound tour operators, wholesalers and visitors. The visitors were to a large extent interested in obtaining Oman Air’s booklets and brochures on the tourist attractions in Oman, whilst experiencing the famed Omani hospitality. Oman Air’s 100 sq. metres stand was expedient to signify our prospect strategies in the course of the expansion of our operations.”

In his statement, Al Haremi added, “The figures of the World Tourism Organization have shown promising tendency in relation to the tourism industry in the Middle East valued at 148 Billion US Dollars, or 6.9% of the total revenue. Tourism and travel industries in the region represented 4.10% of the total revenue, ensuring the acceleration of the regional economy. It is worth stating that the design of Oman Air’s stand and the initiatives employment were well appreciated by all participants, visitors as well as the exhibit organizers.”
He further said, “ATM granted us a significant interaction with members of the travel and trade industries on a global level. Oman Air’s stand was attended by members of our resourceful staff, to control the flow of the mounting numbers of visitors. The extensive international media coverage assisted us in exposing our strategies, also promoting our tourist packages all over the world. This year’s exhibition witnessed a greater number of media presence (836) with a raise rate of 25% compared to last year’s figures.”

He concluded saying, “This was a demonstration introducing GCC to the world. ATM became the most prominent tourist market. It is on the rise every year, in which it exposes the region’s tourism industry growth. In addition, all internationally recognized tourism organizations worldwide have shown interest in the Middle East as one of the main targeted markets. This was apparent, as another trade visitor record with some 12,067 industry professionals attending in the first three days of the event - an 11.45% increase on the 2005 event.”

ATM, yet again succeeded this year in attracting 111 new participated exhibitors for the first time representing different countries such as Japan, Poland and Ireland. With this, the total number of participants reached 1750 using the exhibition, whereby an exhibit area of 22437 sq. metres was occupied promoting about 50 official institutions from 59 countries, showing a growth rate of 39% compared to last year.

Oman Air starts Summer Schedule

As of 1st May, 2006, Oman Air commenced its Summer Schedule with an increase in the number of flights to various WY destinations in the Middle East. Daily flights are operated to Beirut, Bahrain and Doha, while Cairo and Kuwait have an increase of 5 and 14 weekly flights, respectively. In addition, Dubai has seen an increase to 44 weekly flights from 27 weekly flights making the total departures out of Muscat up to 124 flights per week.

Commenting on these increases, Mr. Abdulrazaq Alraisi, Senior Manager Sales, stated that Oman Air is trying to make this summer another exceptional season in order to cater to the increasing number of passenger traffic to and from Oman.

He added that with the khareef season just round the corner the increase in the number of frequencies and connections will have a positive impact on the tourist activities, besides facilitating the commercial and industrial segment as well. Oman Air Holidays has also come up with different travel packages to suit the needs of every valued passenger, thereby endorsing the fact that Oman Air continues to play a pivotal role in promoting tourism in Oman.

In conclusion, he stated that the increase in flights and convenient connections provide the traveller a better access to Salalah in order to enjoy and witness the natural phenomena of khareef. Oman Air has already committed itself to promote the khareef festival with promotional and awareness campaigns in co-operation with the concerned authorities in the Dhofar Governorate.
If you want to beat the summer heat with some real adventure, then diving options in Oman have something to offer.
Are you one of those who believe that Oman’s beauty lies only in its spectacular mountainscape, idyllic beaches, alluring wadis and scenic fjords? If yes, then you are wrong. The surface beauty of this wonderful country spans beneath the sea surface to a unique underwater realm. Those who have plumbed the underwater pockets of Oman will testify to the fact that Oman’s beauty lies in its sub-aqua world, a fascinating world of colour and amazing critters.

As Oman is blessed with 1,700 kms of coastline, watersporting activities are endless. Oman is quickly gaining a reputation for being a fabulously seductive blend of excellent diving, within easy reach and excellent onshore facilities.

Little wonder then, adventure buffs from across the world are teeming to Oman to savour the underwater experience. Catering to this domain is a slew of diving companies. Prominent among these include the Oman Dive Centre, the Blue Zone Water Sports, the Mirbat Dive Centre and the Musandum Sea Adventure Tourism.

To browse through this spectacular world all you need to have is an interest to explore the underwater world. You can meander into coral reefs, watch close-up myriad species of sea creatures regaling in bewitching shapes and hues. If you are not brave enough to dive, then you could opt for snorkelling.

The sea here is blessed with about 900 species of fish ranging from cleanser wrasse to the huge whale shark. Oman’s delightful haunting sea includes sharks, surgeonfish, eels, angelfish, turtles, all cohabiting in harmony. Eighty-five genera of hard and soft corals are found in Omani waters which include table corals, beautiful black corals, colourful whip and teddy-bear corals. Because of this, Oman ranks high in fish population and is rated as one of top dive sites in the world.

Among the top dive sites in Oman are the Daymaniat Islands, the Fahal Island (Shark Island), Bandar Jissa, Bandar Al Khayran, Quriyat and Ras Al Hadd.

As Oman is blessed with 1,700 kms of coastline, watersporting activities are endless.

What differentiates and distinguishes the marine tourism of Oman is the exciting drop-offs with exotic underwater scenery.

Scuba diving, snorkelling or boating in Bandar Al Khayran has its own excitement. Its shallow bay dives and deep wall dives of the area lure both the novice and the experienced.
Those who have plumbed the underwater pockets of Oman will testify to the fact that Oman’s beauty lies in its sub-aqua world.

A good variety of coral and abundant marine life makes Fahl Island one of the most popular dive sites in Oman. The Damaniyat Islands, a string of nine rocky outcroppings and smaller offshoot crags in an ocean sector roughly 200 sq kms, is also a favourite site. Musandum provides divers with new challenges in what is wild environment.

But the real treasure of dive sites is in the Muscat area where you have a wide choice. Clear waters, vibrant reefs and easy accessibility make tourists opt for the Muscat area for their diving activities.

Oman’s diving sector is highly organised with most dive centres having PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) certified instructors.

Though Oman’s waters may not be as clear as the Red Sea, yet the sheer size and quantity of marine life here is without equal.
Beirut
Melting pot of cultures
Cosmopolitan Beirut, with its million plus denizens, conveys a sense of life and an energy that is immediately apparent. Lebanon’s capital Beirut’s geographical position - a great promontory jutting into the blue sea with dramatic mountains rising behind it - has made it a premier destination for tourists who come from all corners of the globe to savour the sun. An ancient city with a venerable past, 5,000 years ago it was a prospering town on the Canaanite coast. Beirut survived a decade and a half of conflict and so has earned the right to call itself, “The City That Would Not Die”. Beirut has always been a welcoming city. Hospitality to visitors is a source of pride. What else would you expect from a city where you can wake to the simultaneous sounds of the Muslim call to prayer and Christian church bells? It has always felt Western with a touch of the Orient, a place where great cultures meet. The city’s favourable weather, good business climate and vibrant lifestyle have always attracted travellers worldwide.

Although Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese-American philosopher, spent most of his life in America, he constantly felt an irresistible pull from his native land. “Every time I close my eyes,” Gibran wrote, “I see those valleys full of magic and dignity and those mountains covered with glory and greatness trying to reach the sky.”

Five universities help keep ideas and innovations flowing. The flourishing art scene, including theatre, film making, music and plastic arts add to the sense that this is indeed a city on the move.

The preserved Cedars in Al Shouf, situated in the mountains of southern Lebanon, is the nation’s biggest natural reserve and covers more than five per cent of the country. Some of the Cedar trees are more than 2000 years old and provide an ideal habitat for 27 different kinds of wild animals like wolves, hyenas, wilds pig, gazelles, foxes, tigers and at the same time, has 100 different species of birds and 124 types of wild plants.
The forested area makes for a popular park for the people of the region, visitors and tourists to watch the birds and plants, and ride bicycles on the well-equipped paths to keep fit.

From the top of the rough mountains, one can enjoy a complete panoramic view of Wadi Al-Biqaa on the east and the Mediterranean sea, on the west. One can see the inter-blending of grasses and Mediterranean plants. The cedar trees and the plethora of flowers and plants which attract animals and migrating birds are the other amazing sights of this region.

The downtown or D.T. (dee tee, as the Lebanese call it), presents a strange mixture of architectural styles. It is based on architectural eclecticism of all the forms and styles around the Mediterranean and beyond; some elements from the Italian Tuscany and Venice, some Andalusian forms, a few components of the Mauritanian style and sometimes even exact copies of the French Classical Style. The D.T. and the waterfronts near it are being newly developed in the form of glass-and-steel towers and constructions that round out the post-modern shape of the new central Beirut. The Hamra area, in the northwest of Beirut, is a great place to visit. Here, you'll find the city's banks, hotels, restaurants, cafés and main post office. The area has a good vibe and is also great for shopping. In the vicinity, the American University of Beirut offers a compact museum of archaeology, with collections of Phoenician figurines. Also worth exploring is the Sursock Museum, in eastern Beirut. It contains displays of Turkish silverware, icons and contemporary Lebanese art. A walk along Beirut's Corniche is a pleasant way to pass the time. Pushcart vendors offer an array of local snacks and drinks, and there are open-air cafés.

A must-see is an interesting Omari Mosque, sometimes known as the Grand Mosque, which was originally built in the Byzantine era.

The temple at Baalbek, about 40 miles northeast of Beirut, is the ruin of the largest religious structure ever built by Rome. The base of the temple, begun around 20 A.D., was almost 290 feet long (88 metres) and 160 feet wide (48 metres).
The 54 columns that supported the structure's immense roof were each more than seven feet (2.2 metres) in diameter and soared 65 feet in height. It is famous for its exquisitely detailed but monumentally scaled temple ruins of the Roman period, when Baalbek, known as Heliopolis was one of the largest sanctuaries in the Empire.

A must-see is an interesting Omari Mosque, sometimes known as the Grand Mosque, which was originally built in the Byzantine era.

Beirut's famous Pigeon Rocks stand tall in the sea. Restaurants in this area serve local and foreign cuisine, and cliff-side cafés offer a good range of snacks.

Lebanon is the most exotic Mediterranean ski destination. Lebanon's six ski resorts are all within 90 minutes' drive of Beirut. The Cedars is the highest, at more than 2,000 metres; Faraya-Mzaar is the largest and most sophisticated, with 16 lifts. On a good day you can ski off-piste from the resort of Faqra.

Within an hour's drive of Beirut are many attractions. Dog River, just 15 kms from Beirut on the northern highway, has commemorative inscriptions and bas-relief sculptures carved into the limestone cliffs.

Jounieh has grown from a cluster of red tile roofed houses into a city of high rise buildings on the mountainside. The old town is full of interesting sights and for a good view of the city and coastline, one can take the cable car up to Harissa, a climb of 620 metres.

Jeïta Grottos consists of a 6 km labyrinth of galleries on two levels. A flat bottomed boat offers a unique tour of the lower level past sweeping willows and gigantic stone flowers. Equally impressive is the upper grotto where monstrous mineral deposits crouch in shady corners.

In between the mountains lies the narrow fertile plain of the Bekaa Valley, some 3,000 ft. above sea level.

Lebanon's greatest Roman ruins are in the north of the valley at Baalbek, 86 km from Beirut. The acropole at Baalbek is one of the largest in the world. It contains the huge temples of Jupiter and Bacchus.

The Lebanese have quite a fondness for dining, and the plethora of restaurants in the city amply attest to this fact. Their cuisine is one of the most sought after in the world.

Nightlife in Beirut is pulsating, with discos, dinner-dancing, all on offer. Take some time out to enjoy a Turkish bath at the Al Nouzha Bath in Basta Tahta, which has separate men's and women's hours. You can also visit Beirut's racetrack, where every Sunday purebred Arabian thoroughbreds run.

With Oman Air, Beirut is just a flight away!

VIBRANT: Cedar trees are common, and right, skiing is lively.
Wadi Bani Khalid
For the tired souls

Oman is punctuated by a string of wadis (riverbeds) nestled amidst lush date plantations. These pockets make for interesting places for picnicking and excursions.

One such spot is Wadi Bani Khalid where the elements of nature blend. The serenity of the place offers balm for body and soul.

This wadi is filled with water throughout the year. The water is still and glistens under the sun. It is a place where you can commune with nature, as the wadi is famous for its lush green oases, water pools and deep canyons. Most visitors to this spot are awestruck by its serenity and almost unreal pace of life.

Wadi Bani Khalid is one of the six major wadis in the Sharqiyyah region and is located around 250 kms from Muscat on the way to Sur. The tarmac road takes a deviation to the left from the main road and leads you to the town of Wadi Bani Khalid and later you have to cross the foothills of the Eastern Hajar mountains to get to the wadi.
On your way you get splendid and spectacular views of the steep mountains and fertile wadis dotted with date palms. The actual Wadi Bani Khalid is serenely ensconced in high mountains. The visitor has to park his car and take a walk to reach the turquoise green pools of water. Even as you walk, you will notice the water flowing through the falaj system. The falaj system is essentially a network of underground aqueducts through which water flows, by gravity, from springs or wells to villages and farms.

Surrounded by beautiful date palms, the wadi is an oasis in all senses of the word. There are two pools of water here. One is the deep pool where only the expert swimmers can have fun by jumping from a small bridge laid out against two rocks like a diving board. A word of caution about this pool is that it is deep on the edges and shallow in the middle.

The water seems to be springing from the mountainside and flows down to the smaller pool which is not very deep. Children and women generally frolic in this pool.

The Moqal cave is also found in this area and you will need to cross the pools to reach the cave. The path is clear along the wadi and lined by trees. But as you progress the path becomes steep and it will not be suitable for children. As you follow the shiny path on the rocks, you will finally reach concrete steps on the right side of the wadi where the entrance to the cave is located. Using flashlights, one can enter the cave but it is difficult to get through the cave because you need to be on your hands and knees to get inside the cave. Or, opt out and just soak in the lap of nature. Wadi Bani Khalid offers a relaxed atmosphere to visitors, enabling them to relax and break the monotony of the routine and strenuous lifestyle.
Marriage is one of the most important contracts existing today between a man and a woman. It represents a special union that is often strongly linked to religious doctrine, where men and women are bound to each other through their faith.

Throughout the world wedding ceremonies have a rich history and ethnic diversity. For thousands of years religious beliefs, traditional rituals and cultural ancestry have shaped the ways in which people get married.

In Oman ceremonies vary from one region to another according to tribal habits, religious beliefs and status. Weddings are considered great family and community affairs and ceremonies usually take between three to seven days.

Article by Sarah White - Bait Al Zubair
The traditional way to find a bride in Oman is to take the advice of one’s mother, sisters and other female relatives. Wedding ceremonies themselves are full of ladies keen to secure a good wife for their kinsmen and search potential bridal candidates. Once men display an initial interest in getting married, arrangements start being processed.

The first part being to ascertain the interest of both the parties and their families. Usually this is completed over the telephone, with the ‘potential’ groom’s mother calling the ‘possible’ bride’s mother. The ‘bride’s’ mother will then discuss the matter with the family, and if they all agree they will then investigate the ‘groom’ to assess his eligibility. Every family tries to ensure that a bride from their family will get on with their future husband and be financially secure.

Once the bride’s family agrees, her mother will call the groom’s mother to fix a time to arrange the engagement called Al Khutooba. During this event dinner will be served and both families (females only) will negotiate the dowry (money) from the groom. The money is used to prepare the bride for her wedding and future life, which includes several special dresses, perfumes, cosmetics, jewellery, furniture and household accessories (but usually the groom arranges the home and its furnishings). The money required ranges from approximately 1,000 to 10,000 Omani Rials. Some banks even offer special loans for bridegrooms for this purpose. The complete bride’s trousseau consists of the agreed amount of money from the groom, and gifts (usually gold jewellery) from both families. During the Al Khutooba the ladies will set the delivery date for the dowry, an event known as Al Haaq or Al Mahar.

Prior to this event the groom and his male relatives will visit the bride’s father and her male family to secure a date for the Milkah, a ceremony proclaiming the marriage before God and the community that takes place in the mosque.

The Al Haaq or Al Mahar precedes the Milkah. At this ceremony the bride’s female family are the hosts and the bride is not present. The groom’s female family brings the money and gifts of gold; traditionally they were brought in a mandoos (an Omani chest). They arrive with traditional musicians and dancers to celebrate the giving of the dowry. An appointed lady from the groom’s side will then announce the dowry and gifts piece by piece to the invited guests and then a lady from the bride’s side will do the same for their gifts.

*COLOUR OF LIFE: Henna sketching is an important component of Omani weddings.*
As soon as the engagement is fixed the bride and the family start preparing and planning. The wardrobe is crucial as a bride may require three to seven specially made dresses for the various parts of the wedding ceremony. The traditional bridal dress colour is green and outfits are usually highly ornate. Today many brides wear white dresses that are often covered in crystals and can cost thousands of Rials to make. Special shops also rent out dresses for brides from about 300 -700 Rials depending on the design and style.

It is important to note that elaborate jewellery and ornamental applications of henna on the feet, ankles, calves, hands and arms are also considered essential elements of bridal dress.

In Muscat, there are often two events to celebrate the henna application, one in private and one in public. Firstly the private henna event consists of very close female family members and friends of the bride and groom that gather at the bride’s home. The bride usually wears a traditional green dress and scarf that covers her whole head and most of her body and the guests drop money on her head. She sits on a specially decorated green chair or cushions. The henna paste is brought into the room on a tray with rose water in a special sprinkler called a mresh, an incense burner, a bowl of water and a small candle. The ladies then sing special songs while the bride’s relatives put the tray at her feet and light the candle. A designated and skilled family member starts to carefully apply the henna to the soles of her feet. It is very important that the henna is applied well and by an experienced lady.
The henna should completely cover the sole of the foot leaving space for intricate designs to be added later in private. When her feet are nearly finished the groom's family will drop money on the bride again. Guests will be fed and their hands and heads will be sprinkled with rose water, then the bride's family will perfume them all before they leave.

It is important to note that elaborate jewellery and ornamental applications of henna on the feet, ankles, calves, hands and arms are also considered essential elements of bridal dress.

The next day the bride will have her special intricate henna applied. Bridal henna is very special and almost magical; designs are full from the tips of the fingers to the elbow and from the tips of the toes until the knee. The design for the bride has to be unique and very fine with tiny intricate designs. Other female members of the bride and groom's family will also have special henna but the designs are less ornate than the bride.

The next ceremony for ladies is the public henna, which is a much larger and grander affair. This often takes place in a hired hall or ballroom today to accommodate all the guests invited. A decorated bed covered from all sides is constructed for this occasion; it is adorned with colourful fabrics and traditional jewellery for the bride to sit in, called Al Hijlah. Some brides today prefer to sit on a decorated stage with a special ornamented sofa or chairs. The bride then sits in the Al Hijlah or decorated chair with only her feet exposed. The bride's female family members and friends gather to watch henna being ceremoniously applied to her feet amidst special celebratory songs and dances.

The groom will then arrive with his female relatives in a procession across the room to the bride. A lady who carries the pyramid style decorated mubkarah containing a plate full of henna leads the procession. The bride's family will then swap plates giving the bride's henna to the groom's family and the groom's henna to the bride. The groom will then put money on his bride, followed by relatives who may then drop money in a bowl. Guests are fed and perfumed before or after the groom's appearance. Some grooms in Muscat will also have a separate henna celebration and henna will be applied to the soles of their feet without any decoration.

Today some families also arrange a wedding dinner in hotels or homes, and the bride often wears a white dress and veil at this event. This occasion is usually for ladies only but some families have mixed gatherings. The bride often arrives and makes a special procession to a stage where the groom will meet her with his family. A wedding cake is often cut with the bridgroom's sword and served to the guests. Throughout the various wedding ceremonies, the bridgroom will usually wear a bisht or shal. The bisht is a flowing translucent cloak that is usually black or beige edged with golden trimmings, it is common within the Gulf, but in Oman it is worn with a dishdasha, khanjar, and turban called a musr. The shal consists of two parts - a long strip of fabric worn around the waist with a khanjar tucked in and a matching musr. He will wear a khanjar (Omani dagger) around his waist and usually carry a sword.

One of the most significant parts of the Omani wedding is the Zafaf, where the bride is brought to the groom, from her family home to her new house (which maybe with her in-laws or a separate villa or flat) where she will begin her new life. If the groom lives with his parents, a special bridal room is newly decorated for the arrival of the bride. If he has separate accommodation the whole place is decorated and furnished for the couple. Wherever the location the groom and his female relatives will have a special dinner. When they reach the bride’s home they sing special songs and her female family members (except her mother) will escort her to the groom’s abode. The bride is usually veiled completely from head to toe with a green coloured scarf. The bride and groom are then united and their wedded life begins. The next day the groom’s family invite the bride’s family for a special lunch to celebrate the marriage. Some couples then depart on honeymoon.
The Arabs had left an indelible mark on Southeast Asia. During their journeys by dhows, they not only spread Islam and Islamic culture as far as Indonesia and China, but also carried their merchandise for trade. The intrepid Arab sailors, roaming through 9,600 to 16,000 kilometres of unknown territory (6,000 to 10,000 miles), had brought back endless tales of mishaps and adventures - as well as reports of exotic kingdoms bordering the Indian Ocean and China Sea. These stories - repeated, embroidered, expanded and exaggerated - were the basis of the epic of Sindbad the Sailor, as immortalized in A Thousand and One Nights.
Oman is referred to as the land of Sindbad. Scholars said that the fables spun around Sindbad may have been versions of actual exploits and gave examples. One was Sindbad’s method of collecting diamonds from a serpent-filled canyon: by dropping chunks of raw meat into the canyon and retrieving the meat - with gems stuck to them - through the use of large birds. This story, they said, was first told by troops of Alexander the Great returning from India.

Scholars said that the fables spun around Sindbad may have been versions of actual exploits and gave examples.

A voyage to prove that Sindbad’s legendary voyages are rooted in historical fact - and they certainly proved that the voyage itself is possible was successfully taken out in 1980. In a hand-built craft stitched together with coconut string, and navigating with medieval navigational instruments, British author-explorer Timothy Severin and a crew of 25 sailed the dhow 9,600 kilometres (6,000 miles) between Muscat and Canton. With the help of Omani shipwrights, Severin set about building an authentic replica of the kind of boat Sindbad might have sailed to China over 1,000 years ago. Based on early Arab and Persian sketches and written descriptions of ninth-century, deep-sea trading vessels, he and the shipwrights designed a ship 26 metres long (87 feet), with a 6.4 metre beam (21 feet), and two meter draft (six feet). It was built of hand-sawn wooden planks sewn together with hand-rolled coconut rope - no nails - and was powered by two triangular cotton sails - no engine. They quickly found out, however, that both the materials for such a craft - and the craftsmen were scarce. To find both, Severin had to scour the most backward and remote places of the region - where traditional boat-building methods still survive. In all, the voyage took just under eight months. The dhow used for the purpose is still showcased at the Al Bustan roundabout in Muscat.

Severin then said. “The Sindbad chronicles took one captain and added other adventures to his own,” he said, adding that it was this embellishment and expansion of his exploits, that eventually turned Sindbad from a man - “who came from Sohar but operated out of Basra” - into a myth. Severin and the crew, in fact, believe this so strongly that they named the dhow that they planned to sail to China - Sohar, after the town in Oman where they say Sindbad was born.

By making seven voyages, one for each day in the week, Sindbad symbolically travelled forever. So long as man lives.
Traditional treatment with needles can work wonders. There are over 100 systems of alternative medicine still in practice all over the world. Every country and region has its own traditional system of medicine.

Alternative therapies are getting increasingly popular owing to relatively low costs and the absence of side effects. Among these traditional treatments, acupuncture is one of the most sought after. It is an ancient system of healing developed over thousands of years as part of the traditional medicine of the East, particularly China. It is based on the belief that the stimulation of specific areas affects the functioning of certain organs of the body, and has evolved into a system of medicine that restores and maintains health by the insertion of fine needles into
acupuncture points just beneath the skin's surface. These are very specific locations and lie on channels of energy.

The term itself, explains an acupuncture expert in Oman, combines two Latin words - acus and puncture; acus is needle, and puncture, as we know, is to make a hole.

Explaining the principle of acupuncture, he says that when the body is infected by an organism, it becomes diseased. Any curative system, such as allopathy, prescribes medicines to wipe out that organism and the body becomes all right. But acupuncture works on the principle that the life force in the body circulates through meridians - there are 14 major meridians - that are connected by over 1,000 sensitive points in the body. Only 700 of these are named. If any of these points get blocked, they affect the connected organs, resulting in disease.

“We believe that nothing can travel by itself and needs a pushing force. That is why nature has created acupuncture points - to collect the vital force and send it to different parts of the body. Clearing the blockage through needles, and now also laser energy, forms the basis of this science.

The acupuncturist takes needles of micro mm diameter - made of two metals, places them above or below the vital points, and tries to release the block.

“The moment the block is released and you regain the flow of the life force, the person starts returning to normal. That is the reason we do not have what is called chronicity in this science and, at the age of 50, we can start treatment for polio which somebody might have got at the age of one,” he says.

Acupuncture is slowly gaining popularity as an alternative form of treatment. It is used extensively for a variety of medical purposes ranging from the prevention and treatment of disease, to relieving pain and anesthetising patients for surgery.

One of the main aims of acupuncture is to restore the health, to maintain a balance of yin and yang within the whole person to prevent illness occurring and to restore existing health.
Seven steps to Successful Managing

Being a manager is one thing, but becoming a superlative manager requires a little more effort, which raises you over the level of the ordinary. This in no way is as difficult as one may think, nor is it as hard to achieve. With the will and the drive to succeed, any reasonably able executive can aspire to become the high-power, high profile success-story and become a result getting manager with a high employability quotient.

1. Boost self-discipline

Like most people, if you find it easy to deliver your best work when you are feeling on top of the world, the litmus test of your ability is if you can deliver when you are feeling low. Usually, at moments like this do not give in to the temptation to snarl at your colleagues or let your customer feel as if you are doing them a favour.

Try to behave, as you should, as a role model. You have to set the standard when it comes to personal department, but make certain that the standard is the highest. A foolishly indulgent moment of impulsive misbehaviour can ruin years of effort when it comes to your career and reputation.

2. Be kind always

You don’t have to prove that you are manager material by bullying everyone around. Perhaps some teachers you had, relied on intimidation to get you to fall in line, but that does not make a good manager! Your job and efficiency involves the support and assistance of others. You will not be able to do things by yourself. Managing efficiently is no job for the Lone Ranger. Mistreatment of your fellow workers will have a curious effect on you. Amazing though it may seem, it would appear that your own self-esteem would be adversely affected. This is because, though you may feel a high after grinding a couple of your co-workers underfoot, the effort very soon loses its novelty and you begin to see the downside of what you have done. It can also get quite lonely by yourself, and if you do not feel good about being isolated, how can you ride high? If then you do not perform effectively, whom else can you blame?
3. Posting goals
You need definite and clear-cut goals. If these are unclear, your career path will be mighty uncomfortable. Much of your time will be spent in running very hard to stay in the same place. Effective leaders must set goals. The people who work for them expect it, and it has been found that most leaders fall flat in this area. Most subordinates feel that their managers do a poor job of setting goals for them. The only way to circumvent this problem is to write down your goals and those of your people and post it up for them all to see. In this way, employees are constantly reminded to keep their goals (and yours!) in view at all times.

4. Criticism is creative
Criticism may not always be pleasant, but it is generally accurate. It also provides you with a fair picture of the way ahead. If you are seen to be hostile to such feedback, people will start hesitating to tell you what you need to know. You, your methods and effectiveness will suffer and there will be nothing you can do about it. Your subordinates are often the best source of such inputs, listen carefully and then ACT!

5. Problems and Solutions
It doesn’t take much expertise to pick out the mistakes, but Problem Pundits take inordinate delight in sharing their insights repeatedly. There are some in every office; probably your own workplace has a few. These are the guys who find themselves relegated to the boondocks. With careers at a standstill the problem assumes frightening proportions. Blaming the boss or the top management team shows your own weakness and disloyalty and will be a poor example to your subordinates who will take the same liberties with you! You need to support the management even if you don’t concur with them. The best is to make constructive suggestions that are relevant and applicable. Be the king of Solutions!

6. Bounce in with enthusiasm
Good vibes are infectious, so if they emanate from you, you can be sure that your team will brim with productivity. If you are enthusiastic, your team will reflect your mood and be enthusiastic themselves. A long face and lugubrious demeanour plays havoc with group morale, good leaders would do well to remember to always radiate good vibes so that their teams blossom.

Be optimistic about everything, if you try to see the bright side of things your subordinates will look at the unfamiliar with optimism as well. This is generally halfway to a solution! Be passionate about your work and the effect is a shot in the arm to your people! You are role-model material: let them emulate you!

7. Opportunities knock, open the door!
Many opportunities are like those flowers that are born to blush unseen. They look too much like work to be appreciated, as tools that can be utilised to display your leadership skills.

Such opportunities rarely come served on a platter ... you have to go out and find them and bend them to your paradigm. Initiative is essential to get you there first, take calculated risks if necessary and you will be instrumental in turning the company around! Your staff will look to you for guidance and leadership, provide this and they’ll follow you into the darkest reaches of night.

Developing these qualities is not the easiest thing in the world. You need to commit, and to do that you need to be convinced yourself that you could do it! Not all leaders are committed, take the challenge and rise to the top!
Platinum is precious but not pretentious. The metal is a real treat for jewellery connoisseurs. Chic and trendy, white gold is a luxury to indulge in.

Whether you are a somebody to reckon with or just about anybody, if you have got platinum on you in any shape, size or design, you are bound to stand apart because it is one of the most precious and rare metals found today with which we adorn ourselves. The message is loud and clear - platinum is the metal to be seen in. It looks like steel, yet is three times as expensive as the yellow metal. It may not have the sentimentality of gold or the aura of diamonds but it dazzles in the fashion sweepstakes. Its rarity confers on it an air of exclusivity.

Though often believed to be a metal "without history", platinum goes back to many centuries. Formerly, often disregarded by miners in search of gold, as a lesser-valued variant of silver, it rose to prominence owing to its lustre and tensile strength.

Over time, platinum has been acknowledged as a metal with immense industrial uses. During the Second World War the non-military use of platinum was disallowed. But so great was the demand for "white metal" jewellery that gold was mixed with other metals to make white gold.

The yearly production of gold is about 3,500 tonnes, while that of platinum is only 125 tonnes. It's often said that the entire production of platinum can be put in a single room. The metal costs up to three times that of gold. Nearly two tonnes of ore need to be mined to extract enough platinum needed to make a single ring!

By far the most precious, platinum jewellery is of heritage value and will always be in demand because of its exclusivity. An extremely strong metal, platinum endures the ravages of time.

Some of the world's greatest jewellers like Cartier, Faberge and Tiffany cast their designs in platinum to ensure they are preserved forever. World famous diamonds like "The Kohinoor", the "Star of Africa", "The
Hope” and the “Jonker I” are all set in platinum as the metal’s strength and enduring nature holds and secures diamonds best. One needs to see diamonds set in platinum to realise that the luminescence of the metal truly complements the sparkle and the fire of the diamonds like none other.

International celebrities like Jennifer Aniston, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Brooke Shields, Courtney Cox and Ashley Judd have often been seen flashing their platinum beauties. At the Oscars, platinum shines brightly on most star nominees.

It is probably the unusual beauty, the glowing look and the feel of platinum that is attracting those who have an understated and subdued sense of style. The number of women aspiring to possess platinum is steadily on an increase, even if it is just a simple wedding band or a pendant! Modern women are, today, on the lookout for diverse options for jewellery. Other than wanting to look elegant and be different, women today also want exclusivity in their jewellery and do not hesitate to pay more for that rare look. Platinum is their most obvious and natural choice because of its rareness, exclusivity, elegance, purity and everlasting quality. It also never goes out of style.

One of the most endearing qualities of platinum is its timelessness. A platinum jewel that you buy today will remain the same throughout time, there will be no wear and tear even when handed over to your grandchildren. The everlasting quality of this eternal metal has made it the choice of couples for making wedding bands. So if you wish to proclaim everlasting love, say it with platinum.

The jewellery market in Oman has a range of elegant platinum jewellery items. So if you decide to possess a platinum beauty, look for the pt symbol on every piece and make sure a tamper-proof quality assurance card that states the content of purity of platinum in the jewellery supports your purchase. The quality assurance card will also quote a unique identification number, which is stamped on the jewellery in addition to a detailed description of the piece of jewellery. So go ahead and have your own platinum beauty.
Interesting Facts

- Fish can taste with their fins and tails as well as with their mouths.
- Cheetahs make a chirping sound that can be heard a mile away.
- Every diamond, no matter how big, has only one molecule.
- Eighty per cent of our bodies consist of water.

Riddles

- Which weighs more, a pound of feathers or a pound of gold?
  Both are a pound each, so equal in weight.
- What question can you never answer "yes" to?
  Are you asleep?
- What can't you see that is always before you?
  The future.
- What did one magnet say to the other?
  I find you very attractive.
- What has a lot of keys but cannot open any doors?
  A piano.

Humour

An airliner was having engine trouble, and the pilot instructed the cabin crew to have the passengers take their seats and get prepared for an emergency landing.

A few minutes later, the pilot asked the flight attendants if everyone was buckled in and ready.

"All set back here, Captain," came the reply, "except the lawyers are still going around passing out business cards."

Knowledge Bank

What is blood pressure?

The pressure against the artery walls as your blood pumps through them. When the heart is pumping blood around the body, the blood pressure is highest and when it is filling up with blood ready for the next pump, it is at its lowest. The highest reading is called systolic blood pressure and the lowest is diastolic blood pressure. Blood pressure is recorded as the systolic pressure over the diastolic pressure, for example 120/80, which is normal.

High blood pressure, known as hypertension, is when your systolic blood pressure is consistently over 140, or your diastolic pressure is consistently over 90.
What is it?

Maglev trains

A few countries are using powerful high-speed trains, called Maglev trains. Maglev is short for magnetic levitation, which means that these trains will float over a guideway using the basic principles of magnets to replace the old steel wheel and track trains.

Maglev trains float on a cushion of air, eliminating friction. This lack of friction and the trains' aerodynamic designs allow these trains to reach unprecedented ground transportation speeds. Because of the lack of physical contact between the track and vehicle, the only friction is that between the carriages and air. So Maglev trains can travel at very high speeds (650 km/h) with reasonable energy consumption and noise levels.
A smart carpenter, returning home with his week’s wages, was stopped by an armed robber on a deserted street.

“Take my money,” said the smart carpenter, “but do me a favour: shoot a bullet through my hat otherwise my wife won’t believe I was robbed.”

The robber obliged. He threw the smart carpenter’s hat into the air and put a bullet through it.

“Let’s make it look as if I ran into a gang of robbers,” said the smart carpenter, “otherwise my wife will call me a coward! Please shoot a number of holes through my coat.”

So the robber shot a number of holes through the carpenter’s coat.

“And now...”

“Sorry,” interrupted the robber. “No more holes. I’m out of bullets.”

“That’s all I wanted to know!” said the smart carpenter. “Now hand me back my money and some more for the hat and coat that you’ve ruined or I’ll beat you black and blue!”

The robber threw down the money and ran.
Welcome aboard

Oman Air’s constant endeavour is to make your journey safe, comfortable and enjoyable. We provide below the details of the amenities that are provided on board for your convenience. Should you require anything not listed here, or have any queries, please contact our cabin crew. They will be delighted to be of assistance. If you have any suggestions to improve our service, please convey them to our cabin crew.

Safety Regulations

HAND BAGGAGE: To ensure comfort to all the passengers, hand baggage in the cabin is limited to bags smaller than 24 cm x 41 cm x 51 cm. These must be stored either in the overhead baggage lockers or under the seat in front of you. Please do not leave any baggage in the aisle, galley or in any way that obstructs the emergency exits. Doing so could cause inconvenience and impede evacuation in an emergency.

SAFETY ON BOARD: Your safety is our prime concern. You can find a safety card in the seat pocket in front of you. This card gives you the details of the safety features of the aircraft. Kindly study it carefully, note the emergency exits and pay close attention to the crew’s demonstration of the emergency drill. When the captain turns on the “Fasten seatbelts” sign due to any emergency or bad weather, please return to your seat immediately and fasten your seatbelt. For your own safety, we also recommend keeping your seatbelt loosely fastened when seated during the flight.

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT: Portable electronic items such as personal computers and handheld games may not be used during take-off and landings as they could interfere with the aircraft’s equipment. Pocket calculators, hearing aids and heart pacemakers are exempt. Use of radios and mobile phones are prohibited on board at all times.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE ON BOARD

IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT: For your enjoyment we are pleased to provide programmes in Arabic, English and Hindi; we also show Tamil and Malavalam films in certain sectors. To listen to the programme you wish to enjoy, just plug in the headset and press the channel of your choice on the control unit.

READING AND WRITING MATERIAL: A wide selection of newspapers and magazines in English and Arabic, both national and international, are available on board. Should you require aerogrammes or stationery, our crew will make them available to you.

TO FRESHEN UP: A selection of deodorants, perfumes, soaps, tissues and towels are available in the lavatories; also available are electric sockets for electric shavers. Toothbrushes, toothpaste and combs are available on request.

FIRST AID: Should you require any medical attention due to any pain or discomfort, please contact the cabin crew immediately. They are trained in first aid procedures and emergency care. A first aid kit is available on board.

DUTY FREE SHOPPING: A wide range of products are available on board in the Duty Free Shopping facility; and you can find the details of these in the accompanying literature. Please contact the cabin crew if you wish to make any purchase.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS: If your child aged between 7 and 12 is flying unaccompanied, please inform us while making the reservation. Our staff will be assigned to take care of your child’s requirements, safeguarding their passport, immigration and medical cards.

DISABLED PASSENGERS: Our ground and cabin crew will be happy to assist disabled or injured passengers in every way possible. Kindly inform us of the nature of the disability in advance while making the flight reservation to help us make the necessary arrangements.

INFANTS ON BOARD: We have a limited selection of baby food on board, plus bottles, teats, talcum powder and diapers. Should you have special requirements for your child, please inform us while making your flight reservation and we will endeavour to make arrangements. Our cabin staff will be happy to warm your baby feeding bottles for you. Our aircraft are fitted with baby bassinets which should be requested while making your reservation. If you are carrying a child on your lap, please ask the cabin crew for a child’s seat belt before take off.
Oman Air flies three NG B737-800 aircraft on international routes and to Salalah. This aircraft carries 154 passengers (12 in Business Class and 142 in Economy) and is operated by two pilots and six cabin attendants. Maximum range of this aircraft is 5,940 km, with an average cruising speed of 818 kilometres per hour.

Oman Air flies three NG B737-700 aircraft on international routes and to Salalah. This aircraft carries 114 passengers (12 in Business Class and 102 in Economy) and is operated by two pilots and six cabin attendants. Maximum range of this aircraft is 4,190 km, with an average cruising speed of 818 kilometres per hour.

Oman Air flies four ATR 42-500 aircraft. They carry 46 passengers and are operated by two Pratt & Whitney Canada PW 127 turboprop engines. Maximum range is 774 km, and normal cruising speed is 525 kilometres per hour.