

## Unspoiled Oman Fascinates Celebrities

Date: 31 Aug 2009



As the word spread about the unrivalled natural beauty and cultural richness of Oman that has not opened the floodgates to mass tourism, celebrities in various societal categories across various countries started visiting the Sultanate. The recent times is witnessing celebrities like noted authors, famous media personalities and many other notable figures, who visit Oman, and talk about it excitedly. The new names to join the "IMPRESSED-BY-OMAN-LIST" are the renowned mega-author Sophie Kinsella, BBC's experienced, trained Broadcast Journalist Kate Silverton and Stephen Jardine, Scotland Television flamboyant journalist and award-winning presenter.

With the headline screaming, "Unspoiled Oman draws 'Shopaholic' author" in various US media outlets and beyond the States, Sophie Kinsella has made the readers particularly in the US, to take a closer look at Oman. Picking up threads of the celebrated author's interview are the journals, e-zines and websites dedicated to celebrity news.

In her interview to Jae-Ha Kim of the Tribune Media Services (TMS) that is the worldwide leader in entertainment metadata, the author best known for her five Shopaholic books says that she loves to come to Oman. "I have been to Oman [in the Middle East] a couple of times and always loved it. It is so quiet and unspoiled, with fantastic landscapes, beaches, and snorkeling. We have always stayed at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel, which is a lovely old-fashioned, traditional place," Sophie is quoted as saying.

CELEBRITY TRAVELER: SOPHIE KINSELLA

## Unspoiled Oman draws 'Shopaholic' author

By Jae-Ha Kim

Tribune Media Services

August 10, 2009

Best known for her series of "Shopaholic" books, including "Confessions of a Shopaholic," Sophie Kinsella is using technology to promote her latest novel, "Twenties Girl." The avid traveler is staying put (temporarily) in England to participate in a series of Skype events with fans across the United States. This is a change of pace for the 39-year-old author and fashionista. Whether it's taking a quick weekend trip to England's Cornwall, vacationing in exotic Oman or enjoying a margarita at New York's La Esquina, the former financial reporter is always up for a good trip.

**Q:** What is your favorite vacation destination?

**A:** I've been to Oman [in the Middle East] a couple of times and always loved it. It is so quiet and unspoiled, with fantastic landscapes, beaches and snorkeling. We have always stayed at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel, which is a lovely old-fashioned, traditional place.

Usama Bin Karim Al Haremi of Oman Air's Corporate Communications and Media highlighted that Sophie Kinsella, whose actual name is Madeleine Sophie Wickham (nee Townley), is an English author best known for writing the Shopaholic novels series of chick-lit novels.

"The series of best-selling books by Sophie Kinsella were adapted into a romantic comedy film, Confessions Of A Shopaholic, which was released in February 2009. Adding sheen to her popularity is the recent release of her latest novel Twenties Girl, released in the UK in July 2009," Al Haremi informed.

Another recent visit to beautiful Oman was by the feisty BBC Broadcaster Kate Silverton. In her report on Oman titled 'Heaven on earth', which was published in the UK's Daily Telegraph, Kate writes that she found Oman to be very friendly, and had a wonderful experience sleeping under the desert stars.

Al Haremi informed that Kate Silverton, whom is an extremely accomplished, versatile journalist also a hugely popular established star of the BBC's new generation of exciting talent, found Oman a fantastic but little-discovered holiday destination. Kate whom studied Arabic and Middle Eastern history, is fuelled by an interest in Middle East politics," he said.

"I like Arabic and Islamic culture and had always wanted to go to Oman and its capital, Muscat, because the country sounded so exotic - and it totally lived up to my expectations. When I got the chance to take 10 days off and went to Oman, a fantastic but little-discovered holiday destination, I immediately pounced on the offer."

Kate in her report writes: "No one thinks twice before going to Dubai these days, but I think Oman is a more traditional alternative. The first place any visitor should head for is Muscat's incredible Grand Mosque, then on to the souk in the Old Town, which sells everything from traditional frankincense to the most beautiful silver. But the thing I probably enjoyed most of all was heading into the Wahiba Sands with a friend, setting up camp in the desert and sleeping under the stars. That was a wonderful experience. The best time to visit is probably October to April, when you can be guaranteed sunshine, whether you want to hit the beach or head into the desert."

Kate also found the Omani dishes highly palatable and says her favourite Omani dish is "shuwa" - meat crusted with special herbs and spices, wrapped in banana leaves, and cooked in an underground pit.

Al Haremi noted that this report, which appeared on the UK's online edition of the Daily national newspaper Telegraph.co.uk, drew the attention of many. The online version includes the articles from the print additions of The Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Telegraph as well as web-only content such as breaking news, features, picture galleries, and blogs. It was named UK Consumer Website of the Year in 2007 and 2009 by the Association of Online Publishers," Al Haremi informed.

Furthermore, he added that another report titled 'An Oasis in the desert' published in The Sunday Mail, a Scottish tabloid newspaper published every Sunday by Stephen Jardine. Stephen, whom is one of the most familiar faces on TV in Scotland, draws an interesting comparison between Oman and Dubai.

In his opening note Stephen observes that Dubai is somewhere you either love or hate. "For some, the searing heat and luxury hotels are the recipe for a happy holiday. For others, the constant construction and dearth of history or culture is the stuff of nightmares. But just an hour's flight away is somewhere that should keep both sides of the divide happy. Oman is the oldest independent state in the Arab world, and until 30 years ago, it was also one of the most backward and overlooked."

Al Haremi pointed out that Stephen Jardine had done an impressive amount of research before visiting Oman that is obvious through his observation about the Sultanate. He writes that ever since HM Sultan Qaboos Bin Said took over the reigns of the country, a development plan has built the economy and modernised the country using oil revenue.

"The final piece in the jigsaw is tourism. Over the last few years a few hotel developments have appeared but Oman remains one of the most unspoilt countries in the Arabian Gulf with 1800 miles of beautiful and empty sandy beaches.

"We were staying at the new Shangri La Barr Al Jissah resort, just 30 minutes drive from the capital Muscat. Add in 40 degrees, brilliant sunshine, friendly staff and a lazy river allowing you to float around the complex without your feet touching the hot pavement, and you have the ingredients for a great family holiday."

Stephen in his report makes it amply clear about the impressive service standard available in Oman. "By day three we were getting used to the idea that rain wasn't just around the corner and had settled into a lazy routine of mornings by the pool and afternoons on the beach. The snorkelling was terrific with turtles and an amazing variety of colourful fish visible just off shore. Unlike Dubai, Oman has a real sense of history.

For the last 30 years, the Sultan has been trying to modernise his country and open it to the outside world but it retains a sense of mystery. At night, as the temperature dropped, we visited Muscat just before sunset and were the only tourists on the streets. With the call to prayer echoing around, and the smell of frangipane in the air, we wandered around the walls of the royal palace and felt completely enveloped in another ancient culture.

No visit to the Arab world is complete without a trip to the traditional market and Muscat's souk is a riot of colour and smells. The trick is only to pay what you want to pay for something - but that is easier said than done. After two hours of hard bargaining, we ended up with a scarf, an incense burner - and a football jersey for Jack. I don't think any of our purchases actually turned out to be bargains but I suppose that's all part of the experience. Back at the resort, night-time brought a

completely different atmosphere. Locals in flowing robes flocked to the open-air restaurants to eat under the stars."

Usama Bin Karim Al Haremi of Oman Air's Corporate Communications and Media in conclusion notified that The Sunday Mail is a Scottish tabloid newspaper published every Sunday. It is the sister paper of the Daily Record and is owned by Trinity Mirror. The Sunday Mail is read by over 1.5 million people per week, making it the biggest selling Sunday newspaper within Scotland.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.omanair.com/about-us/press-releases/unspoiled-oman-fascinates-celebrities>