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## Oman Hot Stuff In Tourism Stakes Says Australian magazine, Senior Traveller

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Bringing the focus of international media on Oman, this time on an Australian leisure tabloid, Usama Karim Al Haremi, Head of Corporate Communications and Media, Oman Air said that Oman certainly has become of the cynosure of all eyes around the world: "The foreign media representatives who visit Oman are bowled over the versatile beauty of Oman and the safe option it provides for the discerning leisure travellers. There was a time when the name Oman conjured up nothing special in any minds outside Oman and along the Orient side. Since Oman first opened its doors to tourists in 1987, when 900 were admitted, the experiment has been successful. "Unknown Oman" - Unknown No Longer; what's more the Sultanate is now well placed in the global map of distinct tourism destinations."

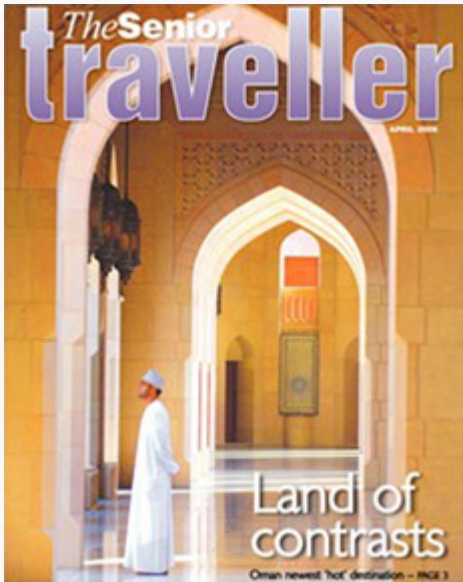


Commenting on the report titled, "Land of contrasts Oman newest 'hot' destination" which was carried in Senior Traveller, (April 2009 edition) an Australian Senior Publication (ASP), Al Haremi said that ASP presents inspirational, insightful, and informative articles across a broad range of topics and issues with an emphasis on quality content. The monthly Senior Traveller Supplement is a full colour magazine full of holiday destinations and travel ideas aimed at the mature traveller. Here are some excerpts from the interesting report:

"Frankincense burns in braziers and spices perfume the air as I wander through the ancient alleyways of the Muttrah souq in Oman's capital of Muscat. It is a traditional Omani market with merchants selling everything from beautiful silverware and jewellery to the softest cashmere pashminas as well as the cutest beaded Persian shoes. Nuggets of frankincense nestle against rows of fragrant oils, sacks of sandalwood, red saffron, rose petals and piles of spices. "Here, feel this pashmina," a merchant says thrusting a pile of soft scarves in front of me. "What about this beautifully carved Khanjar, a traditional curved dagger." Another invites me in to see his range of traditional Omani dress for men - an embroidered cap and the stark white robes, or dishdasha, complete with a small

tassel at the neck that's for dipping in perfume."

Going on to emphasise about Oman and the safe destination that it is, the writer says that it is one of the hottest travel destinations for 2009, and it is a fascinating country. "Rated by the 2007 Global Peace Index as the 22nd most peaceful country in the world – ahead of Australia – I feel safe and find Omanis friendly and welcoming. Situated in the heart of the Arabian Gulf, Oman borders the United Arab Emirates countries of Dubai and Abu Dhabi as well as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen."



Head of Corporate Communications and Media, Oman Air noted that the 2008 Global Peace Index annually compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) rated Oman for the second successive year too as the most peaceful country in the Middle East & Africa. Emphasizing the fact that Oman is renowned for being a first-class safe, stable, and distinct tourist destination worldwide, Al Haremi informed that globally as per the index, the Sultanate is sitting at 25 from 140 countries.

"Perhaps the writer was not aware of the fact that Oman has been named in the Global Peace Index for the second year in a row. The index he explained is composed of 24 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources, which combine internal and external factors ranging from the level of respect for human rights, relations with neighboring countries, political instability, and nation's level of military expenditure to its relations with neighboring countries. As a result, the Sultanate is promptly establishing its self as a key safe destination for travelers." Al Haremi said.

The writer also brings to notice the fact that the ruler of Oman, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who since 1970 has presided over an unprecedented period of modernisation and national renaissance, while retaining a strong sense of heritage and culture.

"Oman is a country of diverse character and landscape, ranging from monsoonal coastlines, mountain ranges, and arid deserts to fertile plains. It is also a land of contrasts, with rocky deepwater fjords in the north, spectacular dunes of wahiba sands, and two large salt flats in the centre, and lush green hills of the Dhofar region in the south, with rugged coasts and beautiful beaches stretching along the 1700km coastline. Muscat is a great base for a first time visit. A legendary city of mystery and romance, it is located on a narrow strip of land between the sea and the rugged mountains.

Writing about Muscat, the capital city and also about the Grand Mosque, the writer waxes eloquent. "The city is a perfect blend of old and new where the traditional values of a 900-year-old city coexist with a bustling metropolis. There is plenty to see, with the amazing Grand Mosque the jewel in the

crown - a gift to the nation from ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said to mark his 30th anniversary. True to its name, it is the grandest monument in the country. It is an amazing construction that can accommodate 20,000 worshippers. The prayer hall dazzles with its 35 Swarovski crystal chandeliers. The main prayer hall has the largest silk carpet in the world that took 600 women four years to weave. The mosque is illuminated from all sides at night.

"The Bait Al Baranda museum traces the history of Muscat and is an excellent grounding for a visit to Oman. Visitors to the country are soon immersed in traditional Omani hospitality. Enter an office or home and you will be offered a plate of fresh dates and a strong cup of Arabic coffee laced with cardamom. Shake your coffee cup from side to side to indicate you have enjoyed the hospitality and you will be rewarded with a warm smile. Visit during the cooler months from mid-October to mid-March. The hottest months are June to August.

Visas are needed to visit Oman and can be bought in Australia, at Muscat's Seeb International Airport for \$18, or when entering any UAE gateway city on arrival. Oman is one of the cleanest countries in the world; littering is forbidden. Arabic is the official language but English is widely spoken.

"Reports like these that appear in the mainstream as well leisure magazines bring in a tangible result. The full color Senior Traveller lift-out is dedicated to travel stories and destinations of interest to the mature travellers. The lift-out appears in all of the publications and has a combined CAB audit of over 370,000 copies a month." Al Haremi noted.

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