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Costa Europe's #1 Cruise Line

Dubai, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain Cruise



The heart of the cruise is Dubai, one of the most exclusive cities in the world, with mosques, sea and desert. Dubai is on the shores of the Persian Gulf - A different landscape is Oman, with its capital Muscat. From Fujairah you can discover the desert. Then a modern city yet still retains its ancient traditions: Abu Dhabi, the capital of the Emirates. The cruise finally touches Bahrain, where ancient and modern blend in harmony.

The Ship: The Costa Victoria is a cruise ship reflects the warmth and spirit of Italy. Intended to be one of the most exciting and stunningly beautiful ships of our time, the Costa Victoria cruise ship is a modern masterpiece offering every comfort, convenience and amenity for her guest's enjoyment. Her avant-garde design set new standards of excellence. From the breathtaking panoramic Concorde Plaza to the sparkling indoor pool, ultramodern Pompei Spa and incredible Planetarium Atrium spanning seven decks, the Costa Victoria cruise ship combines the elegance of European style with the sophistication of American comforts.

Ship: Costa Victoria

Departure: April 4, 2009

Number of Nights: 7

Price: \$1695 - L1 Inside Cabin

\$2995 - B1 Balcony Cabin

\$2195 - E1 Outside Cabin

\$3495 - MS Mini Suite

Day	Itinerary	Arrive	Depart
Day 1	Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	-	-
Day 2	Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	-	1:00 PM
Day 3	Muscat (Oman)	9:00 AM	7:00 PM
Day 4	Fujairah (United Arab Emirates)	7:00 AM	4:00 PM
Day 5	Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)	9:00 AM	6:00 PM
Day 6	Manama (Bahrain)	9:00 AM	6:00 PM
Day 7	Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	1:00 AM	-
Day 8	Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	-	-



Travel Documents

NOTE: PASSPORTS REQUIRED! You are responsible for obtaining all travel documents as well as compliance with Customs and Immigration requirements. You will be required to comply with all government imposed security measures, which may change without notice.

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All About Dubai, Muscat, United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain

Dubai



Dubai is undoubtedly the pearl of the United Arab Emirates. Its name belongs not only to one of the seven emirates but also to the largest city of that emirate (**Dubai City**). **Dubai** is the second largest emirate of the country, after Abu Dhabi. It is situated on the Persian Gulf, southwest of Sharjah and northeast of the capital.

Compared with the other emirates, whose enormous wealth comes directly from oil, only 10 per cent of **Dubai's** gross domestic product is attributable to income from the oil industry. Here the main sources of wealth are the special economic free zone of Jebel Ali and tourism, which has expanded greatly in recent years. Today, **Dubai City** is one of the most intriguing ultramodern metropolises of the 21st century. Its allure is not due to its artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, so much as to the overall vision it offers: a window of luxury and wealth looking towards the future. Here all that glitters is gold.

The city is divided into two: Deira, to the northeast, and **Dubai**, to the southeast, separated by an inlet of the Gulf (called Al-Khor). The city centre is actually in Deira. A pleasant and novel way of seeing the city better is to hire an abra (motorized water taxi). However, you can also walk through the port area of Deira and watch the dhows, as they load and unload their goods in the shadow of the skyscrapers before setting off again for the Red Sea or Indian ports. The Creek is a 12-kilometre canal along which you can take a trip back into the past.

Evidence of **Dubai's** brief history can be seen in the Museum housed in the Al-Fahaidi Fort, built at the beginning of the 19th century. The fort is the oldest building in the city and for many years it was the residence of the heads of state of **Dubai** and the seat of government. The museum (established in 1971) illustrates the fortunes of the emirate, the life of the local people, Bedouin customs, and the region's flora and fauna. The first written evidence of the city of **Dubai** dates only to 1799. Previously, during the 18th century, the area had been settled by the Al Abu Falasa family of the Bani Yas clan.

The city remained a dependency of Abu Dhabi until 1833, when the Al Maktoum family, of the Bani Yas clan, left Abu Dhabi and took control of **Dubai**. Subsequently relations between the two emirates were difficult. In 1892 **Dubai** became a British protectorate. During the 20th century trade and commerce developed, also with India. Over the years, the city also grew as a financial centre until becoming today's ultramodern metropolis.

Despite its unrestrained luxury, **Dubai** remains a Muslim city and is obviously home to a number of mosques, including the Jumeirah mosque, a very fine example of modern Islamic architecture. Near the Ruler's Court is the Grand Mosque, renovated in 1998, which boasts the highest minaret in the city (70 m). The residence of Sheikh Saeed, built at the end of the 19th century, overlooks the sea, and is a splendid example of local architecture. However, **Dubai City** is impressive for its modernity and for the comfort it can offer: from the largest golf course in the Middle East (and the fifth largest in the world in terms of area) to the ultra-luxurious Yacht Club, and from the splendid beaches and amazing hotels and restaurants of every kind to the shopping centers that rival Singapore and Hong Kong.

Grand futuristic projects include the Palm Islands, **Dubai** International City, Burj **Dubai** and The Pinnacle, the tallest skyscrapers in the world, the World, a construction of 300 manmade islands reproducing the five continents, **Dubai** Marina, Jumeirah Islands, Hydropolis Hotel, the first underwater hotel, Madinat Jumeirah, **Dubai** Festival City and finally Dubailand and The Mall of the Emirates, which is planning to build a winter holiday resort with artificial snow in the middle of the desert. It is the world of the rich and the super-rich, with their amusements and hobbies, such as horse and camel competitions. These include the traditional and absolutely fascinating Arabian horse championships, where the best pure-bred Arabian horses in the world compete for the title of the most beautiful and most elegant.

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Muscat



The Sultanate of Oman lies in the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders the United Arab Emirates to the northwest, Saudi Arabia to the west and Yemen to the southwest. It is lapped by the Arabian Sea to the south and east, and the Persian Gulf to the northeast. The Sultanate is a monarchy and the head of state and government is Sultan Qaboos. Despite his absolute power, most of the population seems to approve his rule: since the Sultan came to power in 1970 there has been a gradual opening up to democratic principles and, above all, great economic development. During his reign, Qaboos's liberal outlook has resulted in social and territorial reforms and has considerably improved the general condition of the country.

Muscat is the capital of Oman and one of the oldest cities in the Middle East, dating back to the 2nd century. In antiquity it was the hub of the frankincense trade between southern Arabia and Greece, Rome and the whole of the Mediterranean. The centre of this trade was a place called Khour Rouri, which the Greeks called **Muscat**. The first foreigner of the modern age to reach it was the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, who landed in Oman on his way to India.

The Portuguese conquered this area for the first time in 1507 and ruled it until the 17th century. The city's three forts date from this period, all of them built around 1550. Mutrah Fort stands on a hill, but Jalali and Mirani forts act almost like sentinels at the entrance to **Muscat**. Today, all the forts are used by the police and the military and are not open to the public. In 1649 Sultan Bin Saif defeated the Portuguese and drove them eastwards to Goa (India). Following internal struggles and rebellions, **Muscat** passed for a short period to the Persians in 1737. In 1803 the Wahabites of Saudi Arabia attacked Oman but were repulsed. In 1913 Taimur bin Faisla became Sultan and the territory was renamed **Muscat** and Oman, with the Sultan governing **Muscat** and the Imam governing Oman. Following Indian independence in 1947, the Sultan overthrew the Imam with British aid and unified most of Oman. In 1970, Prince Qaboos Bin Said, son of Sultan Said bin Taymur, staged a palace coup and seized the throne, marking the beginning of the modern sultanate.

The capital has a special charm, for it does not have the somewhat artificial atmosphere that characterizes some of the region's other cities. **Muscat**, Mutrah and Ruwi are the central districts. **Muscat** is the old port area where the Sultan's main palace is situated, along with the luxurious Al-Alam Palace surrounded by amazing gardens, and the Grand Mosque, the symbol of the country's rebirth, with its refined marble architecture.

Mutrah, 3 kilometers northwest of **Muscat**, is the largest commercial and residential district of the port area and home to the multi-colored souk, one of the oldest in the country, a labyrinth of ancient narrow streets covered with palm roofs and lit with lanterns, where tourists can enjoy hunting for silverware, fabrics and all kinds of souvenirs.

There are also the famous fish, spice and fruit markets. A few kilometers inland lies Ruwi, the modern commercial area. To retrace the whole history of the Sultanate, you can visit the collections in the Oman Museum, which also contains an interesting collection of Islamic art and displays

various documents on shipyards, Islam and the architecture of the city's forts.

Muscat also boasts the finest aquarium in the Gulf. In Ruwi the National Museum offers a look at local Omani arts and crafts, while the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum illustrates the main events in the country's history. The Omani Traditional Music Centre is also worth a visit.

United Arab Emirates



The **United Arab Emirates** was once just a collection of little Muslim powers devoted mainly to piracy and the slave trade. In 1853 the sheikhdoms became a British protectorate known as the Trucial States and assumed their current name only in 1971. Their strategic position at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz and the discovery of rich oil deposits in particular has allowed the Emirates to become worldwide economic powers in recent decades.

The seven emirates are Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, **Fujairah**, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain. They cover a total area more or less the same size as Portugal. The emirate of Abu Dhabi covers 85% of the total area, while the smallest emirate, Ajman, is just 250 km². Over the last 30 years, the United Arab Emirates has succeeded in creating an image of progress and modernity throughout the

Middle East and, ever since its foundation, has aimed at becoming an economic, tourist and commercial centre for the whole region. Abu Dhabi and Sharjah have been promoted as cultural tourism destinations, while Dubai attracts tourists with the presence of luxury hotels and first-class shopping centers.

Furthermore, the chance to purchase private property in Dubai, which has only been possible since 2002, is undoubtedly a further step to attracting investment and developing international tourism. In theory not only large companies, but also individuals can purchase property - it is simply a matter of price. In this eclectic and modern context, **Fujairah** is the youngest emirate of the country. It borders the Gulf of Oman and is the best starting point for exploring the east coast, considered the most beautiful part of the country, and especially for enjoying true relaxation and peace in a typical Arab city.

The city itself boasts a museum that houses archaeological and ethnographic exhibitions, an almost spooky old quarter and a 300-year-old fort. You will also find time to do some shopping: typical local crafts include gold and silver jewelry, carpets and fabrics. In the bazaars you will find Western products such as hi-fis, computers and cameras at very competitive prices. Bithna, 12 km northwest of **Fujairah**, has various archaeological sites including the Long Chambered Tomb, which is believed to have been a communal tomb, as well as a large fort.

Nearby, on the border with Oman, is Dibba, an ancient town whose name frequently crops up in Islamic history. It was the site of the great battles of the Ridda wars between Muslim armies and several tribes and cities that had been faithful to the Prophet, but turned against him after his death. The Muslims' victory at Dibba in AD 633 marked the end of the Islamic conquest of Arabia. Today, it is an interesting fact that the three seaside villages that in practice make up Dibba belong to three different territories (**Fujairah**, Sharjah and Oman).

Sharjah is the third-largest emirate and offers the attentive visitor various places of interest such as the country's largest mosque, the archaeological museum, the natural history museum and the inevitable souk. Sharjah has become an important tourist destination only in the last decade. Also in the north is Ras al-Khaimah, the northernmost emirate of the country, which is a true natural paradise, full of green

areas surrounded by the sea, desert and mountains.

Abu Dhabi



The United Arab Emirates is certainly one of the richest countries in the world. Oil has made the fortune of this sovereign state, independent since 1971 and composed of seven emirates: **Abu Dhabi**, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah. The union is governed by a Supreme Council formed by the seven emirs, each of whom is sovereign in his own territory.

Before 1971 they were known as the Trucial States, referring to a 19th century truce between the British and some Arab sheikhs. The Emirates face the Persian Gulf to the north, the Gulf of Oman to the northeast and border Qatar to the north, Saudi Arabia to the west and Oman to the south. At the end of the 18th century the region was known as the Pirate Coast. After the British troops left, the emirs decided to create a single federal state and **Abu Dhabi** was chosen as its capital. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan became the federation's leader and he remained in power until his death in 2004. Since 4 November of that year, Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the sheikh of **Abu Dhabi**, has been President of the United Arab Emirates. Up until the last century, the region was still a simple land, with a tribal society based on sheep and goat farming and fishing.

However, the discovery of precious oil deposits in 1959 radically changed the situation, and every aspect of traditional life is disappearing rapidly. Probably the only aspect of tradition left is Islam, the strictly observed state religion. Little more than forty years ago, even **Abu Dhabi** was just a small fishing and pearling village. The city's history is very recent: **Abu Dhabi** was founded in 1761 and became the seat of the reigning Al-Nahyan family.

During the 19th century it was a fairly famous centre of the pearling industry, but when this sector declined at the end of the century, **Abu Dhabi** went through a dark period. Around 1930 the first oil concessions were sold, but a couple of decades passed before the discovery of the large deposits that triggered its dizzy development.hovels and mud huts were quickly replaced with banks and luxury shops. Now urban settlement occupies the whole of the T-shaped island of **Abu Dhabi**, located right in the middle of the northern coast.

A few signs of the past still remain, like the Al-Hosn Palace, known as the Old Fort or White Fort. It was built by the first heir to the Al-Nahyan dynasty, but was replaced at the end of the 19th century by the current building, now restored and used as an archive. The courtyard and the tile work above the main entrance are of interest. Near the fort is the large and anonymous Cultural Foundation, a building was used mainly as a library and research and reference centre. About 5 km south of **Abu Dhabi** there is a Women's Craft Centre. In the northeastern section of the city the dhow wharf and fish market are worth a visit. The old souk, on the northern seafront, also offers glimpses of local folklore and houses a small gold market and many shops of all kinds where tourists can enjoy seeking out original souvenirs.

Small markets and shopping centers offer the opportunity for excellent buys, especially as **Abu Dhabi** is a free port. Between **Abu Dhabi** and Oman is Al Ain, the main centre of the Buraimi oasis. Its twin city is Buraimi, which is on the other side of the border, but visitors can move freely between the two areas. This oasis is probably the longest inhabited part of the country: the first settlement dates back to 4000

B.C. Here you can visit Al Ain Museum and the Eastern Fort, both in the southeastern part of the city. The museum has displays on local life prior to the unexpected disruption caused by the development of the oil industry and offers various examples of typical crafts, from Bedouin jewelry and weapons to musical instruments and the inside of a traditional Bedouin tent.

Bahrain



The archipelago of **Bahrain**, situated near the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula consists of around thirty islands in the Persian Gulf, mainly made up of sand banks and coral reefs. The climate of the region is characterized by extremely hot summers (the July average is over 35 degrees) and mild winters (the January average is 17 degrees), and it hardly ever rains. Although **Bahrain** has only made world headlines in recent times - thanks to oil and Formula One racing, with the Grand Prix held in the capital, Manama, since 2004 - it actually has a very long history, dating back to the origins of human civilization. Indeed, man has inhabited the archipelago since the end of the prehistoric period. During the 3rd millennium BC it was home to the Dilmun trading empire, which survived for around 2000 years. The epic of Gilgamesh described the main island as a true paradise, where heroes had the gift of eternal life, while some **Bahraini** scholars believe that it was the site of the biblical Garden of Eden. Over the centuries, the region was conquered by the Greeks and then again by the Arabs. During the 16th century, the Portuguese took control of **Bahrain** and used the islands as a trading post.

The following century witnessed Persian domination and between 1810 and 1970 the archipelago was a British protectorate. In 1971 it became the first Persian Gulf country to win its independence. The 1970s also marked the start of its strong economic and financial development linked to its large oil resources. Today, **Bahrain** is a country that perfectly reconciles its age-old history with modernity and progress and is particularly attractive to tourists. Visitors to its capital, Manama, should visit the National Museum, a modern building retracing **Bahrain's** 7,000-year history, with a particular emphasis on the development of Islamic culture and tradition and Arabic writing and spelling. At the Bait al-Qur'an, the House of the Koran, you can admire splendid Islamic manuscripts and particularly - as its name suggests - a vast collection of Korans, some of which date back to the 7th century. If you know Arabic and want to try to read some verses from the holy book written on a grain of rice, you will certainly need a magnifying glass.

In Manama, as in the rest of the country, Islam is present more or less everywhere and, of course, in the many mosques: the Al-Khamis mosque, whose original nucleus can be dated to AD 692, is a very fine example of religious architecture. The Al-Fatih Mosque, the largest in **Bahrain**, can be visited even by non-Muslims. It is an enormous building able to accommodate up to 7,000 believers. Another interesting example of Arabic architecture is the Arad Fort, built in the 16th century and one of the finest examples of military engineering of the period. As in all Islamic countries, a fundamental role in the city's life is played by the souks, the markets where you can buy everything with the inevitable custom of haggling. The most popular products are electronic goods, gold and silver items, clothing and all the typical local craft products.

A couple of kilometers from Manama, you can visit Qal'at Al-Bahrain, also known as the Portuguese Fort, the country's main archaeological site. The excavations, commenced during the middle of the last century, brought to light the fort built on a hill made from the ruins of ancient cities, are still underway today. In fact, seven different archaeological levels have been discovered, dating back to the different phases of the city's past: the earliest dates to around 2800 BC, at the beginning of the Dilmun period. The Ad-Dira Temple also belongs to this period. Nearby the archaeological site of Barbar is also of interest. This complex of temples, dating from the 2nd and 3rd millennia BC, is dedicated to Enki, the god of wisdom.

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