



THE ISLAND OF SOCOTRA

UNDISCOVERED GARDEB OF EDEN

February 10 - February 19, 2025
Led by Tour Manager, Yasser Iskander

Arab governments are embroiled in a heated dispute over the hidden gem of the Indian Ocean, Socotra. A paradise known to only a fortunate few, this island boasts a thriving ancient culture, an array of extraordinary plant life, and an intriguing history. While Socotra officially belongs to Yemen, the involvement of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with their ambitious infrastructure projects, has amplified tensions surrounding the island.

Designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2008, Socotra has earned global recognition for its exceptional biodiversity. Within its untouched realm, hundreds of plant species, reptiles, and land snails exist solely on this remote land. Among these, the dragon's blood trees remain an awe-inspiring sight, resembling flying saucers perched atop their trunks. Additionally, one cannot overlook the *Adenium socotranum* trees, which resemble elephants' legs and bloom with striking pink flowers. The island also plays host to exclusive avian species such as the Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, and Socotra Grosbeak, which thrive in no other corner of our planet. Curiously, bats stand as Socotra's only indigenous mammals. Adding to the island's allure, the ruins of a second-century AD city were discovered by a Russian archaeological team in 2010, further enhancing its historical significance. Some even speculate that Socotra could be the fabled Garden of Eden, evidencing its extraordinary isolation, biological diversity, and strategic position on the edge of Yemen's Gulf of Aden. Many associate the latter with the ancient Sumerian accounts of a paradise called Dilmun.

However, Socotra's allure has fueled a contentious disagreement amongst Arab nations. The United Arab Emirates' substantial investments and infrastructure projects on the island have raised eyebrows, sparking tensions between the UAE and Yemen, the official caretaker of Socotra. The Yemeni government now finds itself embroiled in a delicate balancing act, caught between capitalizing on the economic benefits brought by foreign investments and safeguarding the island's unique heritage. As the conflict rages on, the international community anxiously watches, hoping for a resolution that respects Socotra's unparalleled cultural and ecological value. Many argue that any decisions made regarding Socotra's future must be done so with utmost care, ensuring the island's preservation and sustainable development for generations to come. Only time will tell how this dispute unfolds. Socotra, with its enigmatic allure and fragile ecosystem, stands as a reminder of the need to balance progress with the responsibility to protect our planet's most extraordinary treasures.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Monday, February 10
Arrive in Abu Dhabi (UAE) 

Upon arrival in **Abu Dhabi**, meet and transfer to *Novotel Hotel* or similar for check-in and overnight.

Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on February 09 or in the early morning of February 10 an extra hotel night needs to be booked. s

Tuesday, February 11
Abu Dhabi - Hadibo (Delisha) (SOCOTRA)  

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our flight to **Socotra**. Upon arrival, meet & transfer to *Summerland Hotel* in the island's capital, Hadibo, for a short rest and refreshments. After a traditional lunch, begin the drive to **Delisha**, a well-known swimming spot, and enjoy the beautiful crystal-clear water. Explore several sites in the surrounding area, passing the seaport and Koor Sarheen, and have many opportunities to spot some of Socotra's unique bird life, such as both Socotra & Somali Starlings! After some photo breaks, continue to another spot in Delisha, where we can climb some of the island's enormous sand dunes to catch the beautiful evening views. After enjoying the first sunset on the island, return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, February 12
Hadibo (Homhil & Di-Hamri) 

After breakfast, set off for **Homhil**, one of the island's most stunning areas of natural beauty. Walk with a local guide through a seemingly endless forest of the Dragon's

Blood trees and other examples of endemic Socotra flora, such as the Bottle Tree and Desert Rose. Stop at a small pool fed by a mountain spring, where we can swim with incredible views over the coastline far below - Socotra's infinity pool! Enjoy a delicious picnic lunch at an unusual spot in Homhil, then head to **Di-Hamri Marine Reserve**, where we can swim and snorkel by the Coral Reef and enjoy the beautifully rich world beneath the surface; also explore the **rocky red outcrops** that make Di-Hamri so distinctive! Drive back to the *Hotel* in time for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, February 13
Hadibo (Hoq Cave, Ras Ersel & Arher) 

After breakfast, begin the drive to the island's most incredible and fascinating site: **Hoq Cave**. A local guide from the nearby village will show us the way as we walk up the hillside to reach the mouth of the cave, where we will have many opportunities to take photos of the panoramic views as we climb. Inside the cave, explore the eerie and beautiful rock formations (make sure you bring a head torch) and follow the path deep into the mountain. After exploring the cave with our guide for about 2 hours, head back down, where delicious lunch awaits us! Drive to the end of Socotra Island to **Ras Ersel** to watch the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean spot, then drive back to **Arher**, the most beautiful white substantial sand dunes; enjoy walking around and up the giant sand dunes. Drive back to the *Hotel* in Hadibu for dinner & and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, February 14

Hadibo (Nuged, Wadi Difarha, Zahaq, Omak & Digub Cave)



Enjoy an early breakfast, then begin the drive at 8:00 am, driving south to **Nuged** along the old Socotra Road through the mountains. Continue to **Wadi Difarha** for our picnic lunch by the water stream. Then, head to a small nearby village and see the beautiful **Bottle Trees**, one of the unique endemic species only found in Socotra! Next, drive to **Zahaq**, see the shifting white sand dunes, and take pictures, rambling through the dunes, or sit down and enjoy the view.

Drive to see the nearby white sands at **Omak** protected area, take pictures, and explore the area. Continue the drive to **Digub cave**, an impressive small cave, and relax in the cave mouth, a popular hangout spot for locals to enjoy a picnic or a cup of tea. We will head back to the *Hotel* in Hadibo for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, February 15

Hadibo (Diksam, Wadi Difarhur & Fermhin)



Enjoy a very early breakfast and then leave at 7:00 am, heading to **Diksam plateau** for a visit. It is the highlight of many travelers in Socotra due to the stunning scenery and the endless fields of Dragon Blood trees. Pass through a small village where the local inhabitant still uses traditional techniques to harvest the sticky red sap that gives the tree its name. Spend time basking in the area's natural beauty and taking incredible photographs. Enjoy a picnic lunch at Wadi Derhur and spend more time in the afternoon amidst nature and more Dragon's Blood trees before returning to the *Hotel* in Hadibo for dinner, rest, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, February 16

Hadibo (Detwah Lagoon & Shaub Beach)



Enjoy a very early breakfast, then leave at 6:00 am, and begin the day with a drive to a small fishing village where we will board traditional skiffs with local fishermen as guides for a boat trip to the white sands of Shuab. On the way, there is an excellent chance to see dolphins leaping, and we may have the opportunity to try our hand at local fishing techniques ourselves! After a delightful morning at Shuab, we will board the boats, returning to Qalansiah for a picnic lunch amidst the scenery in Detwah Lagoon, one of the most beautiful beaches in all of Socotra.

Continue the drive and get to see the **Old Russian T-34 tanks** left to rust facing the sea and climb aboard for a quick photo opportunity! Upon arriving at **Detwah**, drive to a panoramic viewpoint to get the best views of the lagoon and may be able to spot the flocks of pink flamingos. Drive to **Khoor Ghaba**, where old stories suggest that a star fell from heaven and opened a crack in the earth, creating a lake where we will see people swimming. Head to the nearby saltpans, where the Qalansi locals still get their salt in the traditional Socotri way. Then, continue the drive to see the beautiful *pristine* Detwah Lagoon. Head back to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, February 17

Hadibo (Wadi Ayhaft)



Begin the day with a drive to visit **Wadi Ayhaft**, an enormous valley on the island, and wander, explore, and photograph many of the endemic Socotri plants. On this beautiful day, enjoy a picnic lunch, and in the afternoon, visit the women's organization where they sell the Socotri handcrafts, and then head to the markets for a visit. Drive back to the *Hotel* to enjoy the last dinner on the island and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, February 18

Hadibo - Abu Dhabi (UAE)



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our flight to **Abu Dhabi**. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in. The rest of the day is free at leisure and overnight at the *Hotel*. **(B)**

Wednesday, February 19

Abu Dhabi - USA

OR continue to **YEMEN**



Early morning transfer to airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

OR join us on the exciting journey to **YEMEN**.

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients."

Special Trip Remark: *Knowing the nature of such an off-the-beaten-track journey, all travelers joining this tour will require a high level of flexibility, tolerance, and willingness to go with the flow when things change. We retain the full right to make any necessary changes to the itinerary, the sequence of visits, and the choices of hotels or activities described in the itinerary. Remember your swimsuits and snorkeling mask.*

Visas: *Socotra has a particular situation within Yemen. The Yemeni government, backed by the coalition (Saudi Arabia and the UAE), has allowed tourism to continue in Socotra by allowing Socotra travel companies to obtain work visas for travelers. It takes about two weeks to get their visa approval through the Yemeni Ministry of the Interior's Immigration Department in Socotra. You must print out two copies of your visa - one will be collected when boarding the flight to Socotra, and you will need to show the other copy when you arrive at the immigration counter. Officials will detach and stamp the bottom of the visa approval; if requested, they may also stamp your passport.*

Meals: *Meals are simple but fresh, tasty, and ample. Typical Socotra meal includes flatbread, rice, fish, chicken, salad or cooked vegetables, meat/vegetable soup, and fruits.*

Tour Cost (Land Only & Abu Dhabi/ Socotra/Abu Dhabi flights): \$6,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$595.00

*Price based on group size minimum of 6
participants and maximum of 14 participants*

Trip Grade: III Lodging Level: **



Tour Includes:

- Abu Dhabi / Socotra / Abu Dhabi flights.
- Arrival/departure transfers & AC 4x4 vehicles throughout the tour.
- 2 nights' accommodation at *Novotel Hotel* or similar in Abu Dhabi (pre and post Socotra tour).
- 7 nights' accommodation at best available 3* hotel in Socotra.
- All meals as per the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Tour manager (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- English-speaking guide throughout the tour.
- All activities described in the tour and entrance fees to all sites mentioned unless listed as optional.
- Visa approval letter (obtained through the agent).
- Unlimited bottled water during touring days in Socotra Island.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Trip Grade

III Challenging - Parts of the trip are physically challenging, involve hiking on rough terrain or in sand or into/out of caves. There may be long drives on rough roads, weather conditions with high heat or humidity, and the presence of insects. You may have simple picnic lunches, primitive bathroom facilities along the road and remoteness from modern towns or cities.

Lodging Level

**** Delightful** - Comfortable yet on the Spartan side, usually small but usually with private facilities. It's the best hotel on the island and offers A/C rooms and is located very conveniently in town. (3 stars).

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA / Abu Dhabi / USA.
- Activities and sites not described in the itinerary.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, emails, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on scheduled flights/tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance (Highly recommended).

