



THE ISLAND OF SOCOTRA

UNDISCOVERED GARDEB OF EDEN

November 03 - November 12, 2024
Led by Tour Manager Yasser Iskander

Arab governments are in conflict over an island paradise in the Indian Ocean that few people have ever seen. Socotra, the largest island in the Middle East, is one of the most isolated places on Earth, home to an ancient culture and some of the world's strangest-looking plants. The island is part of Yemen, but the United Arab Emirates has been investing there, building infrastructure.

UNESCO designated Socotra a World Heritage site in 2008 in recognition of its biodiversity. Hundreds of Socotra's species of plants, reptiles, and land snails exist nowhere else on Earth. Notable are the dragon's blood trees that look like flying saucers perched on trunks. *Adenium socotranum* are trees that look like elephants' legs with pink flowers on top. Birds such as the Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, and Socotra Grosbeak are found nowhere else on the planet. Bats are the island's only native mammal. In 2010 a Russian archaeological team discovered the ruins of a city on Socotra dating to the second century AD. Some also hold the island to be the location of the original Garden of Eden due to its isolation and biological diversity and the location on the edge of Yemen's Gulf of Aden, which many connect with the ancient Sumerian tales of a paradise called Dilmun.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Sunday, November 03

Arrive in Abu Dhabi (UAE)



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

Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. if you arrive on November 02 or early morning of November 03 an extra hotel night needs to be booked.

Monday, November 04

Abu Dhabi - Hadibo (SOCOTRA)



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to **Socotra**. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to *Summerland Hotel* in the island's capital: Hadibo, for a short rest and refreshments. After a traditional lunch, we will 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 *Khoor Sarheen*, and have many opportunities to spot some of Socotra's unique bird life, such as both Socotra and Somali Starlings! After some photo breaks, we will proceed 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 your first sunset on the island, we will return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, November 05

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, along with 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 very own 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! Head back to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, November 06

Hoq Cave, Ras Ersel & Arher



After breakfast, drive to the island's most incredible and fascinating site: **Hoq cave**. A local guide from the nearby village will show you the way as you 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 you climb. Inside the cave, you will 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 your guide for about 2 hours, you will head back down, where delicious lunch will be waiting for you! Then, we will 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 huge sand dunes, enjoy walking around and up the giant sand dunes. Drive back to the *Hotel* in Hadibo for dinner & overnight **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, November 07

Nuged, Wadi Difarha, Zahaq, Omak & Digub Cave



Begin the day at 8:00 am with a drive south to **Nuged**, along the old Socotra road through the mountains. Continue to **Wadi Difaro** 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 spend some time taking pictures, rambling through the dunes, or just sitting down and enjoying the view.

Drive to see the nearby white sands at **Omak** protected area, taking pictures, and exploring the area. Continue the drive to **Digub cave**, an impressive small cave, and spend some time relaxing 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)**

Friday, November 08

Diksam, Wadi Difarhur & Fermhin



Leave very early in the morning and head 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. We will then 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)**

Saturday, November 09

Detwah Lagoon & Shaub Beach



After an early breakfast at 6:00 am, 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 the opportunity 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)**

Sunday, November 10

Wadi Ayhaft



Begin the day with a drive to visit **Wadi Ayhaft**, the most 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)**

Monday, November 11

Hadibo - Abu Dhabi (UAE)



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your 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)**

Tuesday, November 12

Abu Dhabi - USA



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

"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".

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. Do **not** forget 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), have allowed tourism to continue on 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 have to 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 in Socotra at the immigration counter. Officials will detach and stamp the bottom part of the visa approval; if requested, they may also stamp your passport.

Meals:

Meals will be 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): \$6,895.00

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 4* Hotel in Abu Dhabi (pre and post Socotra).
- 7 nights' accommodation at best available 3* hotel in Socotra.
- All meals as per itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- 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 for Yemen.
- Unlimited bottled water per person.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA / Abu Dhabi / USA.
- Activities and sites not described in the itinerary.
- Drinks during meals (soft or alcohol) or meals not listed in the itinerary.
- Any required pre arrival & pre departure PCR tests.
- 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)

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).

