

Moving to Oman: Your Relocation Guide



By Appointment To
Her Majesty The Queen
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

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THE ART OF MOVING

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ELECTRICITY:	220/240 volts AC, 50Hz.
INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS:	Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Malaria, Rabies, Tetanus, Typhoid, Yellow Fever
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:	Jan 1, Apr 24, Jun 26, Jul 23, Sept 2, 22 Nov 18, Dec 1
OFFICE HOURS:	Sat-Wed 0800-1300 &1600-1900, Thurs 0800-1300
BANK HOURS:	Sat-Wed 0800-1200, Thurs 0800-1130
EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	968 999
EMBASSY OF OMAN IN THE UK:	167 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5HE Tel: (020) 7225 0001. Fax: 020 7589 2505 Web: http://oman.embassyhomepage.com/ Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1530; 0930-1230 (visa section)
BRITISH EMBASSY IN MUSCAT OMAN:	British Embassy PO Box 185 Mina Al Fahal Postal Code 116 Muscat Sultanate of Oman Tel: (968) 24 609000 Web: http://ukinoman.fco.gov.uk/en
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Moving to Oman from the UK – Information and Advice: **Abels Relocation Guide**

Customs

To the best of our knowledge, the following documentation is required to import household goods and personal effects into Oman. However, it is advisable to check with the authorities that documentation is in order, prior to despatch.

Household Goods

Documents Required:

- Passport (original and two clear copies) including the page where Oman Visa is stamped
- Visa/Residence Permit (two clear copies)
- Inventory in English (fully detailed and two clear copies) Customs does not accept “PBO” entries
- Letter authorising Destination Agent to clear shipment
- Original Bill of Lading/Airway Bill, In case of Express release Bill of Lading, copy of Bill of Lading is required
- Client Oman mobile number (for *Bayan)
- Residence Card copy front and back issued by Royal Oman Police (ROP)
- Duty Exemption Certificate issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for only Diplomatic shipments)

Customer must hold a valid Oman visa – visa / residence permit is required for custom clearance.

Used household goods and personal effects are duty-free, any items below six months will be dutiable and charged @ 5% of the invoice value.

100% inspection on ALL shipments.

Any shipper can arrange more than one shipment at any time.

Personal effects are subject to be open for inspection by custom authorities.

Normal customs clearance takes 6-7 working days for sea and 4-5 working days for air. Fridays and Saturdays Customs will remain closed.

Customs and port authorities will allow 7 days of free storage for full container load shipments, depends on the shipping line as Maersk provides only 5 days. 15 days for Less than container load shipments (LCL) and 3 days for air shipments.

All books, literature, records, cds and audio visual materials are detained by customs for screening and will be released to the consignee only after approval by the Ministry of Information.

*Oman customs has introduced a new E-Clearing System call “BAYAN”.

See website for more details:

www.customs.gov.om/portal/en/eswl/eservices

All documents are to be electronically submitted.

All personal effects and cars shipments arriving in Oman

must pass this system. The shipper has to register at the customs, this can be done by yourself if in Oman or by your local agent who approaches DG Customs at Custom house. You need to carry your Passport copy and residence card copy with you. Customs will register you and you will receive a username and password on your mobile phone. You then log onto the system and authorize the clearing company to clear the effects.

You can add very small amounts of dry food stuff as long as the items are in original packing with their expiry date clearly visible on the pack, the expiry date should be much beyond the date of arrival in Oman.

The approximate time frames for Customs clearance are as follows:

- Sea/full container loads (FCL): 6-7 business days
- Sea/less-than-container loads (LCL): 7-9 business days
- Air shipments: 2-3 business days

The approximate time frames for Customs clearance during Ramadan are as follows:

- Sea FCL: 8-9 business days
- Sea LCL: 10-12 business days
- Air shipments: 5-6 working days

Diplomats’ removals

Documents required:

- Original inventory plus a copy
- Airway bill or bill of lading
- Insurance Policy
- Consignee has to be present for customs inspection
- Passport copy with residence visa stamped or a copy of visa application
- Letter from Ministry of foreign affairs for exemption of customs duty and inspection

Free of national and local duties.

Port police may inspect cargo.

Commodity shipments

Documents required:

- Legalised Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) invoice
- Certificate of Origin
- Copy consignee’s trade licence
- Inventory
- Bill of lading
- Insurance policy

Subject to 5% duties on the CIF value.

Motor Vehicles

Documents required:

- Proof of ownership, (vehicle registration papers, purchase receipt etc)
- Passport copy Oman Visa copy, Oman Residence Card copy of consignee
- Certificate of Export from country of origin
- Authorisation letter from consignee to clear the car on your behalf

Duty between 5% - 10% levied on all cars, except for cars / bikes registered after 2003 and moved from within Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. However such vehicles should be accompanied by statistical report from country of Origin.

New cars must be manufactured to comply with GCC specifications. (Gulf Cooperation Council) specifications.

Cars MUST be left hand drive.

Confiscation and / or penalties can result from non-compliance with any of the above documents required.

Restriction in import of automobiles – Automobiles older than seven years are not allowed into Oman.

Pets

Documents required:

- Health and Vaccination Certificates from Health Authorities in country of origin
- Import permit must be obtained from Ministry of Agriculture before shipping
- Authorisation letter from consignee to clear the pets on your behalf

Only pets 4 months older are allowed.

Import Permit forms may be obtained from the Ministry through the local sponsor and must be submitted with a copy of the pets rabies vaccination record and health certificate.

Vaccination against rabies is required no less than one month and no more than six months before the travel date. Pets must be manifested as cargo on an Air Waybill when transported by air as cargo.

Prohibited Items

- Alcohol beverages and tobacco products Liquors, wine, whiskey is a strict NO, it is prohibited if found in shipments, it can be imposed with heavy duties and penalties, customs will detain under refusal for release. Only Diplomatic shipments are allowed to add this under permission that the embassy handles directly with the ministry and obtains a letter from the Ministry to import Liquor / Wine / Whiskey
- Pornographic literature, videos, films and pictures (including simple nudity of all kinds) nude pictures or paintings
- Products of Israeli origin

- Wireless and communication equipment including walkie talkie systems and remote cordless telephones, telescope
- Political and religious literature or statues that might be deemed offensive to the Omani government or the Islamic faith
- Drugs and narcotics (medicine or prescriptions drugs are allowed in reasonable quantities but can be subject to analysis)
- Objects made of ivory or any endangered species
- Explosives, firearms, ammunition, knives, swords, daggers, spears etc (Even toy guns and decorative items of this nature are subject to confiscation)
- Perishable food stuffs
- Military uniforms and equipment are not allowed until proper approval received from Ministry of Defence.
- E-Cigarettes are prohibited
- Drones are not allowed in the shipment

All matter, books, pictures, records, films, tapes, slides, movies, videos, compact discs, computer software, etc subject to censorship and confiscation (Must be packed separately for easy access) A process which can take up to 3 weeks. If found unsuitable, such items will be destroyed and the consignee is liable to pay a fine.

All prohibited articles detained by customs may be destroyed without the consignees consent. There are no records available of items destroyed.

Wood Packaging ISPM 15 – Fumigation Requirements

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Plant Quarantine Department) has advised that the export of any commodity packed in wood with thickness exceeding 6mm will not be allowed for Export and Import unless they are treated by heat or fumigated by methyl bromide gas and bears the official recognized stamp by the Ministry or the authorized private companies. This requirement also applies to the imported goods to the Sultanate packed in the same wooden material, which shall not be allowed to enter the Sultanate without being similarly treated and bear the recognized official stamp. Therefore for all export shipments which are packed in wood with thickness exceeding 6mm should be heat treated or fumigated and packages are stamped as above. The necessary heat treatment/fumigation certificate should be attached to the Customs Bill of Export before processing. For commodities which are packed in wood with thickness of 6mm or below and or packed in packaging materials other than wood, a declaration from the shipper in their letter head duly signed and stamped should be attached to the Customs Bill of Export before processing. Your OMNI agent will also need a copy of the certificate or declaration as the case may be while booking the cargo for export.

General Information on Sultanate of Oman

Background

The inhabitants of the area of Oman have long prospered on Indian Ocean trade. In the late 18th century, the nascent sultanate in Muscat signed the first in a series of friendship treaties with Britain. Over time, Oman's dependence on British political and military advisors increased, but it never became a British colony. In 1970, QABOOS bin Said Al-Said overthrew his father, and has since ruled as sultan, but he has never designated a successor. His extensive modernization program has opened the country to the outside world while preserving the longstanding close ties with the UK and US. Oman's moderate, independent foreign policy has sought to maintain good relations with its neighbors and to avoid external entanglements. Inspired by the popular uprisings that swept the Middle East and North Africa beginning in January 2011, some Omanis staged demonstrations, calling for more jobs and economic benefits and an end to corruption. In response to those protester demands, QABOOS in 2011 pledged to implement economic and political reforms, such as granting legislative and regulatory powers to the Majlis al-Shura and increasing unemployment benefits. Additionally, in August 2012, the Sultan announced a royal directive mandating the speedy implementation of a national job creation plan for thousands of public and private sector jobs. As part of the government's efforts to decentralize authority and allow greater citizen participation in local governance, Oman successfully conducted its first municipal council elections in December 2012. Announced by the Sultan in 2011, the municipal councils will have the power to advise the Royal Court on the needs of local districts across Oman's 11 governorates. The Sultan returned to Oman in March 2015 after eight months in Germany, where he received medical treatment and has since appeared publicly on a few occasions.

Geography

Oman is located in the southeastern quarter of the Arabian Peninsula and according to official estimates, covers a total land area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers. Foreign observer estimates, however, are about 212,000 square kilometers, roughly the size of the state of Kansas. The land area is composed of varying topographic features, valleys and desert account for 82% of the land mass. Mountain ranges is 15% and the coastal plain is 3%.

The sultanate is flanked by the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Rub al Khali (Empty Quarter) of Saudi Arabia, all of which contributed to Oman's isolation. Historically, the country's contacts with the rest of the world were by sea, which not only provided access to foreign lands but also linked the coastal towns of Oman. The Rub al Khali, difficult to cross even with modern desert transport, formed a barrier between the sultanate and the Arabian interior. The Al Hajar Mountains, which form a belt between the coast and

the desert from the Musandam Peninsula (Ras Musandam) to the city of Sur at Oman's easternmost point, formed another barrier. These geographic barriers kept the interior of Oman free from foreign military encroachments.

Natural features divide the country into seven distinct areas. Ruus al Jibal, including the northern Musandam Peninsula, the Al Batinah coastal plain, the Muscat-Matrah coastal area, the Oman interior, comprising Al Jabal al Akhdar (Green Mountain), its foothills are desert fringes, the barren coastline south of Dhofar, Dhofar region in the south and the offshore island of Masirah.

The northernmost area, Ruus al Jibal, extends from the Musandam Peninsula to the boundary with the United Arab Emirates at Hisn al Diba. It borders the Strait of Hormuz, which links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, and is separated from the rest of the sultanate by a strip of territory belonging to the UAE. This area consists of low mountains forming the northernmost extremity of the Al Hajar al Gharbi (Western Al Hajar) Mountains. Two inlets, Elphinstone (Kwar ash Shamm) and Malcom (Ghubbat al Ghazirah), cleave the coastline about one third the distance from the Strait of Hormuz and at one point are separated by only a few hundred meters of land. The coastline is extremely rugged, and the Elphinstone inlet, sixteen kilometers long and surrounded by cliffs 1000 to 1,250 meters high, has frequently been compared with fjords in Norway.

West of the coastal areas lies the tableland of central Oman. The Al Hajar Mountains form to ranges, the Al Hajar al Gharbi Mountains and the Al Hajar ash Sharqi (Eastern Al Hajar) Mountains. They are divided by the Wadi Samail (the largest wadi in the mountain zone), a valley that forms the traditional route between Muscat and the interior. The general elevation is about 1200 meters but the peaks of the high ridge known as Al Jabal al Akhad (Green Mountain) which is considered a separate area but is actually part of the Al Hajar al Gharbi Mountains, rise to more than 3000 meters in some places. Al Jabal al Akhdar is the only home of the Arabian tahr, a unique species of wild goat. In the hope of saving this rare animal, Sultan Qabas ibn Said has declared part of Al Jabal al Akhdar a national park. Behind the Al Hajar al Gharbi Mountains are two inland regions, Az Zahirah and inner Oman, separated by the lateral range of the Rub al Khali. Adjoining the al Hajar ash Sharqi Mountains are the sandy regions of Ash Sharqiyah and Jalan, which also border the desert.

International disputes are boundary agreement reportedly signed and ratified with UAE in 2003 for entire border including Oman's Musandam Peninsula and Al Madhah exclave, but details have not been made public.

Climate

Oman is a dry desert hot and humid along the coast. Hot and dry inland, strong southwest summer monsoon May to September in far south.

Summer winds often raise large sandstorms and dust storms in interior with periodic droughts.

Environmental Issues

There is rising soil salinity. Oil spills have caused beach pollution. There is very limited natural fresh water resources.

Population

Its estimated at 3,418,000

Currency

Omani Rial (OMR) = 1,000 baiza.

Notes: OMR 50, 20, 10, 5, 1, 500, 250, 200, 100 baiza.

Coins: 50, 25, 10, 5 baiza

All major credit cards are accepted here, including to a lesser extent American Express.

ATMs are widely available throughout the county.

Economy

Oman is heavily dependent on its dwindling oil resources, which generate 84% of government revenue. In 2015, low global oil prices drove Oman's budget deficit to \$6.5 billion, or nearly 11% of GDP. Oman has limited foreign assets and is issuing debt to cover its deficit.

Oman is using enhanced oil recovery techniques to boost production and has actively pursued a development plan that focuses on diversification, industrialization, and privatization, with the objective of reducing the oil sector's contribution to GDP from 46% at present to 9% by 2020. Tourism and gas-based industries are key components of the government's diversification strategy.

Muscat also is focused on creating more jobs to employ the rising number of Omanis entering the workforce. Increases in social welfare benefits, however, particularly since the Arab Spring, dating to 2011, have challenged the government's ability to effectively balance its budget, as oil prices decline. Omani officials intend to reduce social entitlements to cut the deficit but have faced stiff public opposition to spending cuts, hindering their implementation.

Language

Arabic is the official language, English is widely spoken. Swahili is also spoken by Omani descendants from East Africa. German and French are spoken by some hotel staff while Urdu, Farsi and Tagalog are widely spoken by Oman's large expatriate work force.

Education

Is provided free of charge up to the end of secondary education, though attendance is not mandatory at any level. In 1970 there were only three formal schools with 900 students in the whole country. Oman's national educational program expanded rapidly during the 1970s and the 1980s. In 2006–2007 about 560,000 students attended 1053 public schools. The number of students in private schools is about 20,000.

There are also extensive programmes to combat adult illiteracy. Sultan Qaboos University, the only national university near Muscat, was founded in 1986 and in 2006 it had 13,500 students. The 2006 Human Development Report found adult literacy rate to be 81.4% in adults (older than 15) up from 54.7% in 1990. For the same period youth (15-24) literacy rate increased from 85.6 to 97.3%. Public expenditure on education was reported to be 4.6% of GDP and 26.1% of total government spending.

Religion

Ibadhi Muslim 75%, Sunni Muslim, Shi'a Muslim and Hindu.

Health

Oman has an extensive public health service (free to Omani nationals), with many hospitals and health centers. Treatment varies according to the location. Hospital emergency treatment is available. Health insurance is essential

Inoculation regulations can change at short notice. Please take medical advice in the case of doubt.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers arriving from an infected area.

Vaccinations against tuberculosis and hepatitis B are sometimes recommended.

Food and Drink

All water outside the capital area should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Bottled water is available and is advised throughout Oman. Food bought in the main supermarkets can be regarded as safe. Outside the capital area, milk may be unpasteurised and if so, should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Road Safety

Driving at night can be dangerous outside Muscat, as there is a risk of hitting camels that stray on the road. Rental and company vehicles particularly have been vulnerable to robbery in the Thumrait, Marmul and Nimr area of Southern Oman. There was a spate of such incidents in 2002 although vehicle theft appears to be the motive and so far victims have been unharmed.

People renting cars should take advice on security from hire companies before undertaking travel. All off road travel should be with at least two vehicles suitably equipped in case of emergencies. Those intending such travel should take out sufficient insurance to meet the costs of a major rescue operation.

Driving is on the right. There are good roads in Muscat and between Muscat and major towns in the interior. Driving standards are by regional standards good but drivers do tend to speed and tailgate.

Remain vigilant not to offend local culture when driving, e.g. through abusive gestures or language. This can lead to complaints being lodged with the police, who have been taking forward cases of reported insulting behaviour to Omani citizens.

Some recently reported cases suggest that when travelling alone by car at night it is prudent (especially women driving alone) to lock all doors and ensure car windows are closed.

Anyone involved in a minor road traffic accident, will not necessarily have to call the police, but they must follow the procedures set out on the ROP website at: **www.rop.gov.om** and must keep a Minor Road Traffic Accident form in their car. This is available from the ROP website or from your insurance company. It is the responsibility of car rental companies to keep forms in their cars.

This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact **www.fco.gov.uk** for the latest travel advice:

Local Laws and Customs

Seat belts must be worn in the front seats, you are not allowed to use mobile phones whilst driving (you can be given an on the spot fine). Speed limits are clearly posted on major roads. There is a minimum 48 hours in jail for any traffic offence in which a driver tests positive for alcohol. (the legal blood alcohol level in Oman is close to zero). Traffic laws in Oman are strictly imposed.

The import (even temporary) of right hand drive vehicles is not allowed. Oman is a Muslim state and Islamic customs, in public are strictly observed. In public, general modesty of behaviour and dress is expected. Women who wear shorts

or tight-fitting clothes, in particular in downtown areas are likely to attract unwelcome attention. There have been some reported cases of sexual harassment. The import and use of narcotics and obscene material are forbidden and can lead to imprisonment. There are severe penalties for drug offences including, in some cases, the death penalty. “Soft” drugs are treated as seriously as “hard” drugs. Recent experience has shown that possession of cannabis, even in quantities of less than one gram, will bring a minimum prison sentence of 12 months followed by deportation. Non-Muslims can import alcohol, to a maximum of 2 litres per family. It can be bought at a duty free shop at the airport on arrival, but within Oman, alcohol can be purchased only by personal licence or at licensed hotels and restaurants. Pork products are available at specially licensed food outlets. Homosexual behaviour is illegal in Oman.

Photography

You should ask permission before attempting to photograph people or their property. ‘No Photography’ signs exist in certain places and must be observed.

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in the Abels Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date Abels cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy.