

# Lulu Guinness discloses Oman Beauty through The Daily Telegraph

**Bin Karim Al Haremi, Head of Corporate Communications And Media of Oman Air believes that Oman is one of Arabia's most unique countries.**

It is increasingly becoming an attractive tourist destination and along with its great variety of activities, culture and history, it suits the taste of any traveller. Without exception he added, anyone who comes to the Sultanate cannot fail to be impressed with what is truly the undiscovered jewel of Arabia. Oman has it all he added, stunning mountain scenery, frankincense, endless white beaches, a rich cultural heritage, and diverse scenery and wildlife make it a unique destination for adventure travellers. The Sultanate he highlighted enjoys a 5000-year-old culture that is unique in the Arab world, but what makes it really special besides its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, is the people, who are usually ranked by visitors as some of the most genuinely courteous, warm, and friendly in the world. Al Haremi affirmed that Oman is a safe broadminded and tolerant nation, and it will not take much effort to experience the famous hospitality and generosity of spirit of the Omani people, in which derives from their ancient traditions and culture.

Head of Corporate Communications And Media of Oman Air further notified that Lulu Guinness, a world-renowned also one of Britain's leading accessory and fashion designers visited Oman last year and was enthralled with its exquisiteness too. Lulu's unique creations are sold in department and specialty stores worldwide including Harrods and Selfridges in the UK, Bergdorf Goodman New York, Collette in Paris, and Harvey Nichols in Dubai & Istanbul, also a number of boutiques dotted around the globe. Al Haremi said that in October 2006, Lulu was awarded an OBE from Her Majesty the Queen of England in recognition for her contribution to British fashion. Lulu Guinness published on May 20, 2008 her article titled "When a girl really needs Oman" in the prestigious Daily Telegraph, highlighting the beauty of the Sultanate. Head of Corporate Communications And Media of Oman Air gave notice that the Daily Telegraph founded in 1855, is indeed a leader in a competitive news market, also leading its broadsheet competitors in circulation. In October 2007 he said, the Telegraph was the highest selling British quality paper, with a certified average daily circulation of 882,413. This compared with a circulation of 642,895 for The Times, 364,513 for The Guardian, and 240,134 for The Independent.

In her interdiction, Lulu believed that this tiny desert sultanate, with its great shopping, beautiful scenery, and superb beach resort, is the perfect place for lifting the spirits. She went on to say, last year, as winter dragged on, I was finding it hard to keep my spirits up. What I felt I most needed was a spa with blue skies and sunshine. In the past, when I have felt like an old car needing a service, I have flown half way around the world to find out-of-season sun, then spent a week recovering from jet lag. But with two school-age children and my own business, I have to grab short holidays - a fortnight away is just not an option. So, after talking to friends I decided

to try the Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa in Oman - only a seven-hour flight (same as to New York) and, even better, only a four-hour time difference to recover from on my return. I arrived in Muscat late at night and was met upon arrival.

Being in awe she said, I have never been to a country where everyone you meet is so keen to tell you how well they live and how fortunate they are. This seems to be due to the benevolence of the sultan, who is widely admired. By chance I was there for National Day, the 37th anniversary of his accession. Electricity, and especially coloured light bulbs, was much in evidence for National Day - everything was festooned with lights, including the 20-odd miles of new roads between the airport and the beautiful mountains and coastal setting of the Barr Al Jissah.

En route to my hotel, my driver proudly pointed out the spectacular new mosque, the largest in Oman. Inside, the biggest chandelier in the world is made entirely from Swarovski crystals and weighs 5.8 tons. The building also boasts the world's largest hand-woven carpet - when I visited later in the week it certainly had the wow factor in spades.

Barr Al Jissah is actually three hotels. My week was to be spent in the Al Husn, the best of the trio, raised high on a bluff above the main beach. Al Husn turned out to be the last word in discreet and sophisticated luxury, epitomised by the worldly charm of the manager, who seemed to be everywhere at all times, smoothing every guest's stay. Whether they needed one of the hotel's Bentleys for the airport or a golf buggy to take them to the fine CHI Spa, he was there, dapper and full of self-deprecating humour. What makes a good hotel? I found out the next day when venturing to the beautifully designed infinity pool, where a helpful and smiling pool attendant brought me not only towels and chilled water to drink but an iced face spray. In the mornings, I stayed by the pool. In the afternoons, I hit the spa to encourage my regime and smooth my wrinkled brow (and I thoroughly recommend the treatment I had on the first day. It took four hours and took me from stressed to serene).

The resort's other two hotels are the Al Waha and the Al Bandar. The Al Waha is promoted as "Oman's first dedicated leisure hotel" and is the largest. Little Turtles, the resort's children's club, is there and is ideal for guests with small children as the babysitting service allows undisturbed evenings in the restaurants and bars. The feature I most enjoyed was the "Lazy River", which wound from one hotel pool to the next, great fun for all ages to float lazily along under bridges and through the beautiful tropical landscaping. It would have been easy not to leave this paradise - especially now I had discovered Al Husn's enchanting private beach, which had not only a perfect cove in which to swim and snorkel, but also comfortable sun beds and umbrellas and, as by the pool, a face-spray service.

However, I did manage to drag myself away twice. Pat organised a tour around Muscat Old Town, where everything was on a very small scale. Even the museum, which records Oman's history, is small and perfectly formed.

I loved its wonderful antique jewellery, which had me chomping at the bit to get to the souk where the best jewellery and artefact shop was owned by a national, as she mentioned. The thousands of coloured necklaces hung from the ceiling, and great barrels filled with rings and small objects, all around £5-£10, kept me happy for hours. The owner - fabulous in his finery -

asked to have his photograph taken with me and then proudly showed me his wall of fame. He was particularly proud of a picture of himself with Kate Moss festooned in his jewellery.

The only other place I left my mountain oasis for was the Chedi, a more contemporary-looking hotel closer to Muscat, where I had an excellent dinner at the seafood Beach restaurant. The Chedi is a fabulous looking hotel - the whale vertebrae, mounted on plinths and beautifully lit at the entrance to the restaurant, were quite stunning. Its location, though, and beachfront are disappointing.

Back at the Al Husn, I was not surprised to read that various publications had voted it among the world's best new hotels of 2007. The pride of everyone who worked there mirrored the pride the Omanis all seem to have in their country. It was very refreshing after listening to everyone moaning in London - but with free schools and college education, free hospitals, no income tax and money being pumped into tourism, the local people have a lot to smile about. I shall certainly be returning next time I need to top up on sun, serenity, souks and smiles.