Contents

- Introduction 5
- Musandam Peninsula 6
- Al-Batinah Coast 7
- Muscat Coast 8
- Al-Sharqiya & Wusta Coasts 9
- Dhofar Coast 10
Oman is known for its fascinating beaches which extend for about 3165 km and vary in their magnificent topographies: from a 500 m high rocky cliff and bays that look like fjords (unique throughout Arabia and the Indian Ocean) in Musandam Governorate, to estuarine creeks that meet the sea in Al-Batinah Region; from a prominent, temporary cape in Muscat Governorate to Al-Sharqiya sandy beaches which embrace the sea waves; and from the sand hills in Marbat to an extremely high rocky cliff in Al Mughay in Dhofar Governorate. This coast, which consists of coral rocks, seashells and sand and which provides nesting areas for sea turtles and many species of birds, is indeed one of the most beautiful coasts in the world.

Beaches hold great importance for both the Omani people and international tourists. Many Omanis make their living from fishing along the coastline extending from Musandam to Dhofar, while others consider beaches as a tourist spa in which many entertaining activities can be carried out, such as water sports including fishing, boating, etc. Moreover, some coastal areas in Oman provide one of the largest nesting areas for turtles, not to mention the whales and dolphins which can be spotted near the seashore, one the entire coast.

Many tourist facilities were established along Oman's coastline, due to its richness in fascinating landscape, beautiful beaches, bay and creek reserves and abundant fauna and flora. Such facilities played a role in affecting the status of the beaches. Moreover, the strategic location of Oman, especially the Hormuz Strait, which is the main passage for tankers to the Gulf, exposes these beaches to the hazards of oil pollution resulting from the disposal of oil waste ballast water in Oman's territorial waters.

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources is putting in tremendous efforts to ensure the safety of Omani beaches and their marine life, by providing all sorts of equipment that tackle pollution and provide waste disposal facilities throughout the Sultanate, reviewing its National contingency Plan for combating pollution oil spill, assessing coastal developments to ensure their adherence to the environmental laws and regulations, having the marine pollution monitoring program, being involved in Coral Reef and beach Cleaning Campaigns, providing lectures and awareness programs on the importance of Omani beaches and ways to protect them, and creating adequate solutions for the environmental problems.
1 Musandam Peninsula

The Musandam peninsula is distinguished from other coastal areas of Oman because of its numerous deep bays are surrounded by vertical limestone walls that are about 200m above sea level and its distinctive sandy beaches.

The coast of Musandam is divided into three main areas:

a) Teebat to Sheikl Masud cape,
b) Sheikh Masud Cape to Khasab, and
c) Khasab to Daba.

The coast line of this area consists of different elevations from the open sandy beaches to low wadis, or 100-300 m high rocky cliffs.

This area is also distinguished by its numerous creeks.

The local people, most of whom live near the coast, depend mostly on the abundant fish resources. The area also rich in mineral resources.

In winter, the semi-enclosed waters of the deep narrow bays provide shelter for numerous marine birds, especially the migratory ones. Um - Alfayreen island is considered one of the most important areas for nesting birds as well as a small number of hawksbill turtles, nesting on 16 beaches of this area.

Some of the problems that Musandam beaches face are:

1. Oil pollution, is one of the most important environment problems that this area suffers from. It is caused by the tankers that pass through the Hurmus Strait, which is one of the busiest international maritime routes in the world.

2. The disposal of waste on beaches by either fishermen or tourists.

2 Al-Batinah Coast

Stretching from Khawr Kalba to Al-Sawadi cape and Barke the Al-Batinah coast is distinguished by a strip of continuous sandy beaches and the shallow areas that stretch for 2 km into the sea.

The extremely steep Hajar mountain range adjoins the northern part of the coast.

Wadis provide eroded sediments to beaches from this mountain range. Coastal rocks are scattered in the intertidal areas or in the shallow onshore.

The most distinguishable feature of Al-Batinah coast is the creeks, which form a proper environment for the growth of mangrove forests. Kalba, Shinas and Al-Nabir Khawrs are some of the main creeks on this coast.

The local people depend on fishing and agriculture for a living and most of them live near the coast.

Birds such as seagulls, terns and herons, visit Al-Batinah coast during their migration in the winter. They feed on sardines, which are one of the main fish resources of this area.

Some of the most important problems that Al-Batinah beaches suffer from:

1. Tar balls, resulting from the disposal of oil waste which occurs during the passage of tankers by Al-Batinah on their way to the Gulf area.

2. Disposal of construction and finishing waste on the beaches.

3. Mining sand from the beaches.

4. Water leakages from some of the nearby houses.

5. Coastal erosion, which is the most serious problem at present, and especially for the people who live close to the beach.
Muscat Coast

The northern part of Muscat beaches, which stretches from A'Sawadi cape to Al-Qurm is a natural extension of the sandy Al-Batinah coast and provides nesting ground for bird and turtle species. Many cetaceans also feed and mate in this area. This coast also includes A'Sawadi island, Al-Fahal island and Al-Dimaniyat islands.

The elevations of Muscat coast consist of rocky mountains made of sedimentary stones and films through which numerous bays and creeks run, making it one of the most famous tourist attractions in Oman.

On Muscat beaches, seagulls and several species of terns, red-billed tropicbird birds, and waders visit the offshore islands and some of the onshore islands as well as the rocky peaks during the summer whilst birds of prey and thousands of terns nest on the Dimaniyat islands during the winter. The breeding birds also feed throughout the area. Additionally, cetaceans are commonly observed here.

Muscat beaches are also very rich in mangrove trees which form forests in Al-Qurm and Bander Khairan areas.

Some of the main problems that Muscat beaches face:

1. Marine and oil related activities (trade, oil export) carried out at Mina Al-Fahal and Sultan Qaboos Ports, with the risk of oil pollution.
2. Coastal erosion on some beaches
3. Littering of beaches by the beach visitors, who don't abide by the rules.
4. Drying fish in several areas around beaches, and fishing waste.
5. Degradation of coral reefs by fishing nets.
6. Waste disposal in the mangrove nature reserves.

Al-Sharqiya & Wusta Coast

These coast extends from Deghmar cape to Masirah island and stretch to Dhofar, the coasts have variable elevations: internal sedimentary slopes of different heights, rocky slopes, sand/grave plains, sandy beaches and low plains rich with indigenous plants. Many plains are also salty or extremely salty. Creeks also exist. Some beaches are small and crescent-shaped, while others are vast and consist of gravel and large overlapping rocks.

The two most important areas on these coasts are Bar Al-Hikman peninsula and Masirah island, which encompass diverse and sensitive is also ecosystems. The Masirah channel is also remarkable in its biodiversity. Cetaceans also abound in the area.

Many local people depend on fishing to make a living from the abundant fish stocks in this area. Algae bloom in the shallow waters near the beach due to the upwelling caused by the southwestern monsoons during the summer providing nutrition to marine food webs.

Thousands of green turtles nest on these coasts, especially on the beaches south of Al-Jinz cape where food is abundant for the turtles. Ras Al-Had cape provides turtle species in the entire Indian Ocean. About 30,000 loggerhead female turtles nest annually on the eastern coast of Masirah island, making it the world's most important nesting area for this species. Hawksbill and olive ridley turtles also nest in a Marisah area. Mahut Island also encompasses some of Oman's richest mangrove forests.

South of Bar Al-Hikman coast exists the largest group of the true coral reef in the Sultanate. Covering an area of several km². They are unique, and look like cabbage.

These coasts are also one of the world's most important nesting and feeding grounds for thousands of migrating birds during the winter, and numerous flamingos depend on this coast to find food.

The area suffers from important problems, such as:

1. Sand mining from beaches.
2. Littering near the beach and on coral reef areas.
3. Drying fish near residential areas.
4. Uncontrolled residential growth on the coast.
The elevations of this area consist of lofty limestone slopes on the coast, open and protected rocky habitats, a few sandy beaches and a stable beach that consists of rough gravely nacreous white sand through which stabled small creeks spread (Taqa, Sawli, Rawri, Mughsayl and Salalah). About 135 beaches along the coast from Wadi Haytam to the west of Rakhyut are considered important nesting grounds for both loggerhead and green turtles. Hawksbill and green turtles also feed along the coast of Dhofar while migrating between the north and the south.

Al-Halaniyat islands are also some of the most important nesting grounds for many sea turtles and thousands of birds, especially seabulls, cormorants and masked boobys. The rocky shores along the Dhofar coast are the base for the coral reefs that widely grow in most of the protect small creeks and around Al-Halaniyat islands. A dense cover of brown, red and green seaweeds grows around the rocky headlands and reefs, especially in the summer, due to the southwestern monsoon. Mangroves also grow in some creeks in the area.

Some of the main problems that this area suffers from:

1. Drying sardine fish on some beaches.
2. Risks of oil spills due to shipping activities.
3. Sunken ships in the Oman waters and the ones deteriorated on the beach.
4. Erosion of Al-Qornish beach in Al-Haffa area every year because of the strong current during the summer monsoon.
5. Waste disposal on beaches.