

# Living and Climbing in Oman By Ross Weiter

In the three years from 2004 to 2007 I was lucky enough to work, live and climb in the Sultanate of Oman. I must say that I headed over there with a bit of trepidation, expecting something of a hazardous backward outpost of civilisation at best. Let's face it; Hollywood does not portray Arabs as kind hearted people with an aptitude for fun! Instead of the cliché terrorist I found a warm welcoming people, and an open wild country where camping was permitted anywhere, and acres of unclimbed rock abound.

At first I was on my own climbing-wise, there was no climbing organisation or web site, and the guidebook was woefully out of date. Then I found Kim and Bill the two itinerant English teachers at the local Sultan Qaboos University,



**Vincent at Vulture Rock**

then Patrick and Natalie the two French guides who resided in Oman in winter and in France in summer, then Soren the Danish geo-engineer building a new runway at the local airport, and Vincent the Dutch oil reservoir engineer. They all climbed! I was saved!! We started a small circle of climbers, centred around the ridiculously tiny bouldering gym at the Muscat Diving and Adventure Centre (MDAC), where we had to move crates of stuff out of the way every Wednesday just to get access to the 8m of bouldering walls. We would then boulder our asses off on problems set by ourselves, much to the amusement of the head-to-toe black clad Omani chicks at the reception, who were not sure what to make of our cries of wanton triumph and swears of pointless desperation.

There was also the sea side bouldering, where we would hire a fisherman, and every day could do new highball problems above the almost warm sea. Often it would be so stinking hot that falling into water was more a welcome relief than an admission of failure. There were the wadi beds with their water-washed, smooth walls, covered with small pockets. And in Sharaf El Alameyn, I found the only place in Arabia where one could actually climb at the height of summer, due to its northern aspect and 2000m altitude. I put up the first 3 multi-pitch trad routes there.

Between Kim, Bill, Natalie, Patrick and I, we bolted some 100 new climbs in those 3 years in three major areas, and really opened Oman to sport climbing. My PDF guidebooks to Sharaf El Alameyn, Wadi Daykah, and Hadash can still be found on [www.omancimbing.com](http://www.omancimbing.com). Of course life goes on and there are many new areas, guidebooks and climbs now.

Clearly, there is a lot more to Oman than climbing: namely religion, desert, camels, goats, castles, festivals, warm sea, great beaches, halwa, dates, markets, crowded roads, excellent super cheap restaurants and the friendly Omanis..... I will be giving a slide night upstairs at Rosy O'Grady's pub in Northbridge from 7:30 to 9pm on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May, so if these stories sound interesting and you want to see some pics that are not on the internet as yet, come along! Salaam aleykum (peace upon you).

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