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## **Post-Tour Extension to Mysteries of the Arabian Peninsula The Gulf States: Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar**

**November 15-22, 2019**

Nov 15 Day 1: FRI Arrival in Bahrain / Rotana Hotel 5\*  
(If coming from Arabian Peninsula tour: Gulf Air 545, 7:30 pm Transfer to hotel.)

Nov 16 Day 2: SAT Full Day Tour Bahrain / Rotana Hotel 5\*  
**If coming from Saudi Arabia tour:** Depart hotel at 9 am drive from Dammam on the King Fahad Causeway approx. 1 hour to the border check point. Here you will meet other members of the Gulf States tour.

Those who arrived last night from the Arabian Peninsula tour will depart the hotel at 9:30 am and drive approx. 30 minutes on the King Fahad Causeway to the check point.

Opened in 1986, this 25km feat of engineering links Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. It is one of the most expensive bridges in the world. The causeway traverses Umm an Nasan Island, which is a sanctuary for wildlife, and at halfway point there is a facility area, including one tower restaurant, which you can visit even if you don't travel the whole distance to Saudi Arabia. If we have any travelers from our Saudi Arabia tour joining us, we will meet them at this mid-point. Enjoy views and photo opps. If the new tower restaurant is open, we can have tea/coffee/juices etc (pay direct).

Then we will turn back towards Bahrain and proceed about 10 minutes drive to the town of Al-Jasra. We visit Bait Al-Jasra or Al-Jasra House, constructed by Shaikh Hamad bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa in 1907. It was later taken as a summer residence by Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Ruler of Bahrain from 1942 to 1961. The house was designed according to the traditional Bahraini architecture to suit the local environment. Local building materials were used including coral, gypsum and palm-tree trunks. The house consists of several rooms used for different purposes such as sitting, living, family, kitchen and date juice extraction. All the rooms are traditionally furnished. A distinctive feature in the courtyard is the Seyam, a moderately elevated palm front terrace used for night rest.

Continuing south about 20-30 minutes drive, we stop at the small handicraft center, where artists demonstrate their crafts including pottery, weaving, metal work, wood work and model boat building.

Close by, we stop at the very small pottery workshop in A'ali town. This time-honored industry has been handed down from generation to generation. The clay used for pottery is made from a blend of two types of clay. These are combined to create the optimum blend for their products, which range from traditional bread ovens to plant pots and moneyboxes. Kilns are frequently located inside the surrounding burial mounds, and the smoke given off can sometimes be seen from a distance as you approach the village.

Just down the street we will see the royal burial mounds. This is the site of what may be the largest prehistoric cemetery in the world, with approximately 170,000 burial mounds dating from between 3000 BC and AD 600. Each of these mounds covers a stone built chamber that formed the grave. It is suspected that the tombs are the burial grounds of previous kings due to their size, but this is unconfirmed. A few of these are intact today, many having been looted or destroyed over the years. They used to be up to 15 metres (50 feet) high and 45 metres (150 feet) wide, but much smaller now due to erosion. The mounds continue to both mystify and teach historians and archaeologists.

Now we head over to Adhiya, just outside Manama (about 40 minute drive) for lunch at the delightful Le Veranda Restaurant for Bahraini cuisine.

Afterwards, a 40 minutes drive, to the Bahrain International Circuit. This is considered to be the world's premier motorsport facility. It was built by His Highness Crown Prince Shaikh and opened in 2004. The Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosts the annual Bahrain Grand Prix, a round of the FIA Formula One World Championship. Their international standard drag strip, desert obstacle course for 4x4s, Kart Zone, and track days for bikes and cars have introduced the thrills of motorsport to thousands of competitors - some as young as nine - and to hundreds of thousands of fans. We spend about 30-45 minutes here.

BIC's infrastructure is equally impressive: a 45,000 seating capacity, including 10,500 spectators in the main grandstand; the eight-storey Sakhir Tower, with its roof terrace, VIP suites, restaurant and administration offices; 47 VIP hospitality suites; a state of the art pit-and-paddock complex for 11 GP teams; and 18 dedicated buildings for international racing teams. The separate Oasis Complex, meanwhile, provides a second pit building for support race and vehicle testing technical support and a 3000-seat grandstand. BIC's Race Control bristles with the latest technology, including 41 remote-controlled security cameras with zoom capability that enable officials to monitor every aspect of the track from a central point.

Beginning at the landmark eight-story Sakhir Tower, we have a fantastic overview of the tracks from the top VIP observation deck. We will visit the Media Centre, the region's most advanced global communication centre and stop by at the state-of-the-art Race Control Tower. We drive thru the area where the teams stay (individual villas) and where they store and work on their cars. We can pop into the BIC Pit Shop to find souvenirs of your tour, if you like.

Nearby by is Endurance Park, where camels, and sometimes horses and falcons are kept. Unfortunately the camels are all chained, though you can get up close to them. I feel that our clients have all had camel experiences elsewhere so this will not hold interest, except if the falcons are there. We will ask our guide to check on this just prior to your arrival in Bahrain and see if she can confirm if falcons may be there on this day.

Also nearby is a new sports craze: indoor skydiving!. We can have a quick look and see demonstrations. It's about five minutes from the Endurance Park.

Now we proceed towards the desert, driving east to see the First Oil Well. As its name suggests, it is the first oil well on the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf. Bahrain's oil industry began more than 70 years ago. Most people are surprised to learn that Bahrain was pumping oil years before Saudi Arabia began its own search for black gold. The Standard Oil Company of California formed the Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) in 1929. The well is situated below Jebel Dukhan (or Smokey Mountain). Oil first spurted from this well on 16 October 1931, and the well finally began to blow heads of oil on the morning of 2 June 1932. The initial oil flow rate was 400 barrels per day (64 m<sup>3</sup>/d); by the 1970s the well produced 70,000 bbl/d (11,000 m<sup>3</sup>/d), and after that it stabilized at circa 35,000 bbl/d (5,600 m<sup>3</sup>/d). "Well Number 1" - - now a tourist site in Bahrain - - produced 9,600 barrels a day. Close to the well, which has been reconstructed to its first appearance, is a stable. Close to the well is an oil museum with irregular hours. If open we can visit.

Culminate the day at the Tree of Life - (about 5-10 min drive), an Acacia tree that has survived for more than 400 years in the middle of the Bahrain desert without any water supply. Some believe this tree belongs to the "Garden of Eden." This well-matured tree has come to be known as the Tree Of Life because of the mystery surrounding its existence in the middle of the desert and without any known water source. The fact that it stands alone in this area has further raised the curiosity of visitors and specialists alike for many years. The tree, believed to be from the Acacia family, sheds its leaves in winter but grows yellow flowers, which are apparent in both spring and autumn.

Return to the hotel arriving at approximately 6 pm. Rest of evening at leisure.

Dinner: upscale suggestion Rayes Restaurant at the Coral Beach Club (pay direct), facing the Bay and Muharraq Island. You can ask the hotel to provide transportation. Not far from the hotel. Or many within easy walk from the hotel.

### Nov 17 Day 3: SUN Full Day Tour of Bahrain / Rotana Hotel 5\*

Depart at 9 am, we proceed on our sightseeing tour exploring this tiny island state.

We trace the archaeological development of the region with a visit to the Bahrain National Museum (also referred to as National Museum of Bahrain), the largest and one of the oldest public museums in Bahrain. Located in Manama, it opened in December 1988. The \$30 million dollar museum complex covers 27,800 sq meters and consists of two buildings. The National Theatre of Bahrain is next to the museum.

The museum possesses a rich collection of Bahrain's ancient archaeological artifacts acquired since 1988, and covers 6000 years of Bahrain's history. The complex includes three halls; one devoted to archaeology and the ancient civilization of the Dilmun (a trading center, which at its peak, controlled the Persian Gulf trading routes, 6000 years ago), while two other halls depict the culture and lifestyle of Bahrain's recent pre-industrial past.

Through sculpture and ceramics, reconstructed burial mounds, Arabic calligraphy and illuminated Korans, the different periods of Bahrain's history are presented, including a wonderful collection of exhibits, from contemporary Bahraini paintings, sculptures and ceramics to scenes depicting life in the Dilmun civilization and even a reconstructed burial mound, complete with skeleton!

A section on Arabic calligraphy, including a beautiful display of illuminated Qur'ans and other religious documents, is breathtaking, and of course no visit would be complete without a closer look at traditional trades and crafts, which are cleverly displayed in a reconstruction of a typical souq of the 1930s.

Now we head into Muharaq, the historic area. This will be a pleasant walking tour on narrow winding pedestrian-only streets. The places mentioned are all right next to or around the corner from each other.

We plan to arrive at least by 11 am as the souq closes at 1130 am, and all the houses close at 1 pm, reopening at 4 pm.

We begin with a quick stroll in the Muharraq Souq. This is a very traditional souq of the local people.

Next, a visit to Sheikh Isa Bin Ali House. This was once the home of the Amir's great-grandfather, Shaikh Isa Bin Ali Al Khalifa, who ruled Bahrain for 63 years from 1869 to 1932. The 26-room house was built in 1800 and provides a fine example of local architecture, complete with wall carving and latticework, and representative of traditional 19th century life. The house consists of four main sections: the family wing, the Shaikh's wing, the Guest's wing and the attendant's wing. The house is designed in traditional style where the rooms are directly overlooking an open courtyard, with a wind tower, a feature of the traditional architecture in the Arabian Gulf region. The 'wind tower' is constructed 5-6m (16-20ft) above the house and open on all four sides. One of the early forms of air conditioning, this acts as a funnel, catching the breeze and drawing it down into the cavities below, as well as allowing the release of hot air like a chimney. Local building materials were used in construction including coral stone, mortar and palm tree trunks. The windows are decorated in ventilated gypsum geometrical designs for which Bahrain was well known.

From here we go to the Kurar House, established in March 2007 to preserve the dying and unique art of Bahraini embroidery which uses gold threads. The house provides a venue for elderly Bahraini women to pass on the art of Kurar to younger generations. We can see the women working together on the three-sets of hands, unique technique (mornings only, up to 1 pm). Best to get here at least by 1130-12 noon.

We will stop at the Bukhalaf Coffee shop, the oldest in Bahrain. Here we meet the friendly proprietor who will give a short talk about their process and offer us Arabic coffee and dates.

Afterwards, we visit Shaikh Ebrahim Center. Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa was a well-known intellectual in the early part of the 20th century. The centre, which is home to research, a library and a lecture hall opened in 2002. This building today hosts a series of rotating lectures, exhibitions and recitals by prominent writers, philosophers and artists from all over the world. We will also see the guesthouse used to house visiting lecturers and artists.

Then to Abdullah al Zayed house, the man who started the first printing press in Bahrain. Lectures are

given here on Monday nights.

Lunch stop at Raazji, The House of Coffee Restaurant. (not the same as the earlier visited Bukhalaf Coffee shop). <http://www.raazji.com/> This is just across from Shaikh Ebrahim Center. The menu is a sophisticated version of traditional Arabic cuisine. There are options for soup, salads, main dishes. (prices US\$12-28, they take credit cards; pay direct).

After lunch, we poke our heads into a traditional sweets shop and spice shop.

Then we will head back towards Manama and a quick stop for photos at the Al Fatih Grand Mosque, Bahrain's largest mosque and a magnificent piece of architecture. It can accommodate 7,000 worshippers. Grand Mosque Set against the backdrop of palm trees and the sea, the Grand Mosque strikes a beautiful picture. With its exquisite Bahraini architecture, crowned by the world's largest fiberglass dome and blessed with tranquility reserved for the holiest of holy places, The Grand Mosque truly lives up to its name. We will be visiting other mosques during the tour and the interior of this one is not as elaborate, so I suggest not to enter for an inside tour. If time permits and everyone wants to we can. Non-Muslim visitors are welcome, it is important to dress modestly, cover your head (for women) and take your shoes off before entering.

Next is a visit Beit Al Qur'an (House of Qur'an), a multi-purpose complex dedicated to the Islamic Arts. Established in 1990, the complex is popular for its Islamic Museum, acknowledged as one of the most renowned Islamic Museums. It is an excellent introduction to Islam and to Islamic calligraphy.

From here, we go to the Bahrain Fort arriving just before sunset. Known locally as the Qal'at al-Bahrain and previously as the Portugal Fort (*Qal'at al Portugal*). Archaeological excavations carried out since 1954 have unearthed antiquaries from an artificial mound of 12 m height containing seven stratified layers, created by various occupants from 2300 BC up to the 18th century, including Kassites, Portuguese and Persians. It was once the capital of the Dilmun civilization and was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005. The last was built in the early 16th century to defend Portugal's recent acquisition of the islands; for this reason, it is also known locally as the Portuguese Fort. The area surrounding the fort is known as Qalat Al Bahrain and contains lots of hidden history of Dilmun Civilization.

Culminate the day with a visit the Manama Souq with its profusion of colors, sounds, and aromas. The souk comes alive after 5 pm and shops remain open until at least 11 pm. It lies in the center of Manama, near the archway of Bab al-Bahrain and, although much of the surrounding area is modern, the street layout and division of occupations still follow traditional lines. A diverse array of wares are sold including textiles, perfumes, gold and jewelry.

We take a stroll through the souq to the wonderful atmospheric Haji's Restaurant on a small street at one end of the souq. Home-cooked and reasonably price meals (pay direct).

Return to the hotel.

**Nov 18 Day 4: MON Fly to Kuwait / Coperthorne Hotel 4\***

Transfer to the airport for flight Gulf Air dep 9:30 am, arrives 10:40 am.

During the Iraqi invasion, Kuwait City was extensively bombed and damaged. Buildings were fired upon, set alight, and demolished; roads and bridge links were the targets of explosives, and landmarks were defaced. After the invasion's terrible onslaught, foreign investors and the Kuwaiti government are actively involved in modernizing the city and transforming it into a world-class, state-of-the-art business hub. Today, virtually all traces of the invasion have been cleared, and construction cranes dot the skyline.

On arrival, we drive into the city and start with a visit the Fish Market, and Dhow Harbor next to waterfront Souq Sharq (major shopping center). Though I am sure you have seen many fish markets around the world, this one is impressive for its size and modernity. Adjacent to the fish market is a fruit and vegetable market. Souq Sharq is a modern shopping mall so I doubt this holds interest to our travelers.

Suggest lunch stop at Baker & Spice Restaurant, located on the waterfront overlooking the private boats at

Sharq Souk, across from the main entrance to the fish market. Fresh organic foods, creative Arabic cuisine. There are soups, salads, sandwiches, fresh baked breads, main courses of chicken, mutton, and vegetarian. Pay direct. Prices range from \$12-20. They accept credit cards.

Next we visit The Modern Art Museum of Kuwait, a hidden treasure near Sharq Souq. It has no official website. Once we reach it, we are magically transported into a world that so very few people know about. Located in the Sharq District just off Arabian Gulf Road, in one of the few surviving pre World War Two era structures, it offers visitors one of the only permanent displays of modern Arab and international art in the region. The building was constructed in 1939 to house the Madrasa Al Sharqiya (Eastern School) where generations of prominent Kuwaitis studied including the current Emir Sheikh. It hosts a number of exhibits throughout the year. (hours 9 am-1pm & 5-8 pm, Sun-Thurs).

Later, we drive about 12 miles south (approx. 30 minutes depending on traffic) to the town of Al Ahmadi, the area of the oil refineries and headquarters of Kuwait Oil Company. We can only pass by Kuwait Oil Company, but cannot visit it as it is a protected site. **(Photography Prohibited)**. Al Ahmadi is a self-contained community with schools, a hospital, shopping centers. The residents are all employees of the Kuwait Oil Company. We will visit the Kuwait Oil Company Museum if it is open, hours are unpredictable.

We will pass by the petroleum tanks as well, about 10 minutes drive from the Kuwait Oil Company headquarters.

Continue about 10-15 minutes drive, to Al Qurain Martyrs Museum, the home of gruesome battle, February 24, 1991, between invading Iraqi troops and a group of 31 Kuwait freedom fighters called the Al-Massilah group, during the Iraq occupation of Kuwait. There are no exhibits, just the partially bombed out house. It is an important Kuwaiti historic event. It just takes a few minutes to see.

Check in to hotel.

**Nov 19 Day 5: TUES Kuwait City – Full Day Tour / Coperthorne Hotel 4\***

Departing at 9 am, we will pass by the Liberation Tower on the way to Bayt Al Sadu and the Kuwait National Museum.

We first visit Bayt Al Sadu (House of Weaving), an artistic house and museum adjacent to the Kuwait National Museum. Women demonstrate the techniques in the courtyard, mornings only, until about 11 am. It was established in 1980 to protect the interests of the Bedouins and their ethnic handicrafts, Sadu weaving, which is an embroidery form in geometrical shapes hand woven by Bedouin people. The original house existed as a mud building in the early twentieth century but was destroyed during the 1936 Kuwaiti floods. By 1984, Sadu House had registered 300 Bedouin women, producing about seventy items every week. Sadu House The house is built of gypsum and coral, with fine decorations in the courtyard and an elegant use of light and space. It has several chambers each decorated with potted motifs of houses, mosques. It is the best place in Kuwait to buy Bedouin goods.

The Kuwait National Museum is divided into: Kuwait Heritage Museum, Planetarium, Archaeological Museum and Boom Al Mouhallab, a major dhow. (closes at 1 pm).

<https://kuwaitnationalmuseum.weebly.com/>

**National Museum is under renovation and lately the government closes it and Sadhu House without advance notice.** If these museums are closed we will have alternate site visits.

Then to the Tareq Rajab Museum a private collection of the Rajab family. The museum deals with calligraphy, pottery, metalwork, glass, wood, ivory and jade carvings of the Islamic world. Early calligraphy is presented in a separate small room, showing pages from the Holy Qur'an, dating back to the first three centuries of the Islamic period. There are also displays of costumes, textiles, embroideries and jewelry. **(Photography Prohibited)**

Next is a visit of the small Bait al Othman Museum, opened in 2010. It showcases various aspects of

Kuwait's history, culture and life traditions. The museum continues to add new exhibits periodically.

Between 1-2, we stop for lunch at a local restaurant (pay direct).

Continuing on the tour, we will drive past the Seif Palace (Office of the Amir) – **photography prohibited** and the National Assembly – **photography prohibited**.

Then pass by the Al – Hamra Tower, the tallest carved concrete skyscraper in the world) and the Grand Mosque (**photography prohibited**). Its' area spans 45,000 square meters (480,000 sq ft), out of which the building itself covers 20,000 square meters (220,000 sq ft). The main prayer hall is 72 meters (236 ft) wide on all sides, has 21 teakwood doors, and has lighting provided by 144 windows.

The dome of the mosque is 26 meters (85 ft) in diameter and 43 meters (141 ft) high, and is decorated with the *Asma al-hosna*, the 99 names of God. The mosque can accommodate up to 10,000 men in the main prayer hall, and up to 950 women in the separate hall for women. The mosque also contains a 350 square meters (3,800 sq ft) library of Islamic reference books and documents. To accommodate the large number of vehicles belonging to worshippers, the mosque also contains a 5-level car park underneath the eastern courtyard which can hold up to 550 cars. Construction on the mosque started in 1979, and the mosque was completed in 1986.

Afterwards, we shall drive by the Corniche and stop for a photo opportunity of the city skyline on the way to the Kuwait Towers—Landmark of Kuwait. We will ascend to the viewing sphere (120 meters).

The Kuwait Towers are a group of three slender towers standing on a promontory into the Persian Gulf. They were officially inaugurated in March 1979 and are rated as a landmark and symbol of modern Kuwait. The main tower is 187 metres (613.5 ft) high and carries two spheres. The lower sphere holds in its bottom half a water tank of 4,500 cubic meters and in its upper half a 90 seat restaurant, a café, lounge and reception hall. The second tower is 147 metres high and serves as a water tower. The third tower houses equipment to illuminate the two larger towers. The towers hold 9,000 cubic metres of water altogether.

This evening at about 5 pm, we'll stop by the al Mubarakiya souq (traditional Kuwaiti market) for some browsing and exploration. The souqs come alive after 5 and remain open until about 11 pm. Our guide will show you to the best of the outdoor restaurants for authentic Arabic food in a locally patronized setting. (pay direct). Prices will range from \$12-20.

Return to hotel by 6:30 or 7 pm.

**Nov 20 Day 6: WED Fly to Doha/ Al Bidda Boutique Hotel**

Transfer to the airport (max 30 min drive) for flight to Doha, Qatar Air, dep 10:45 am, arrives 12:10 pm. The Kuwait airport is very small and check in is very quick. Met on arrival and transfer to hotel, located inside Souq Waqif.

Ruled by the Al Thani family since the mid-1800s, Qatar transformed itself from a poor British protectorate noted mainly for coalescing into an independent state with significant oil and natural gas revenues. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Qatari economy was crippled by a continuous siphoning off of petroleum revenues by the Amir, who had ruled the country since 1972. He was overthrown by his son, the current Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in a bloodless coup in 1995. In 2001, Qatar resolved its longstanding border disputes with both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Today oil and natural gas revenues enable Qatar to have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world.

This afternoon we start with a visit to Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Qatar Islamic Cultural Center (FANAR) located across from the corniche in old town. <http://www.binzaid.gov.qa/> (If we are there just before prayer time, we are invited to join the prayer room, men and women separately). The prayers last just 7 minutes but you are free to get up and leave at any time. I found the women very friendly and welcoming to me. It was a heart-warming experience.

Across from FANAR, on one end of the Corniche, we visit the interesting Mushereip Museums. Msheireb Museums celebrate the history of four historic heritage houses in the heart of Msheireb Downtown Doha. Located within the oldest part of the capital, they form an important part of Qatar's national history. They reveal unique aspects of Qatar's cultural and social development in inspiring to create trusted environments in which the people of Qatar will engage, converse and exchange thoughts about both their past and their future. Msheireb Museums are an integral aspect of the inner city's regeneration of the old commercial centre with its traditional community-based lifestyle. The restoration of the four heritage houses, Bin Jelmoed House, Company House, Mohammed Bin Jassim House and Radwani House, into world-class museums forms a vital part of the Msheireb Downtown Doha development.

Continue to the stunning Museum of Islamic Art, one of the Gulf region's most fabulous museums. Set in the MIA Park on the waterfront corniche in old town, across from the souq, the museum building stands out as an architectural gem. Once inside, you will see masterpieces of Islamic art, including metalwork, ceramics, jewelry, woodwork, textiles and glass, collected from three continents and dating from the 7th to the 19th century. It takes around one hour to visit the galleries on levels 2 and 3 where you will see some of the finest art of the Islamic world.

Afterwards, visit the Qatar National Museum, just opened March 2019, located across from the Corniche. The museum is built around Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani's original palace.

We culminate the day with a guided tour around the wonderfully atmospheric Old Souk, Souq Waqif. This is the most traditional of souks; it first started as a weekend market for local Bedu, selling meat, wool, milk and other staples. Today, this maze of alleyways covers a large area with separate sections selling traditional clothing, hardware, perfumes, spices, incense, and dried fruit. It is quite modern looking with nicely paved streets, brightly lit store fronts and many restaurants. Often there are groups of men gathered playing traditional music and sometimes with a bit of dance.

One section of the souq is the fascinating Falcon Souq, open 4-8 pm. During falcon season (October to March) you will also see dozens of peregrines and other assorted falcons patiently perched on their stands. They can cost thousands of dollars each. There may still be here since its beginning of April, but cannot guarantee.

The tradition of hunting with falcons began in the region thousands of years ago with desert nomads and the practice still continues today. Falconry is a big hobby for Qatari men, therefore it isn't a surprise to find an entire block of Souq Waqif dedicated to these impressive birds. The shopkeepers will proudly lead you around the falcon showrooms, where a lot of the birds (most of them hooded) rest lined up on their perches. The best part of the experience, however, is seeing young Qatari lads buying their first falcon accompanied by an uncle or grandfather, keen to hand down the family heritage of bird-handling skills.

Everything for and about falcons can be bought in these special shops including burkhas (hoods) and hubara (feathers). There is even a falcon hospital within the souq itself! The top falcons are usually issued with their own passport to ensure their Qatari origin and to testify they haven't been stolen or taken without the owner's permission. So you shouldn't be surprised if on your next flight to or from Doha you'll find yourself seated next to a full-grown falcon, if you are travelling on a Middle Eastern airline!

We will also walk thru the "pet shop" featuring hundreds of exotic birds, mostly flying freely about; and kittens and puppies. The main part of the souq is open until 11 PM.

There are many fine dining options inside the souq. One experience I highly recommend is the stunning Iranian Parisa Restaurant. If you wish to dine here, please let your guide know at the start of the day so he can make reservations for you.

**Nov 21 Day 8: Mon Half Day Tour Doha /**  
Guide will meet you in the hotel lobby at 9 AM.

This morning we visit The Pearl-Qatar (TPQ), an artificial island spanning nearly four million square metres. It is the first land in Qatar to be available for freehold ownership by foreign nationals. The Pearl created over 32 kilometers of new coastline, for use as a residential estate with an expected 15,000

dwellings and 45,000 residents by 2015. The properties here are storybook perfect. One neighborhood, called Qanat Quartier has pastel colored homes along a series of canals.

Next visit Katara, a “cultural village,” located on the eastern coast between West Bay and the Pearl. Spread over 1,000,000 square meters, it was soft-opened in October 2010 during the Doha Tribeca Film Festival, that it has hosted ever since. Many Qatari organizations have their offices in Katara. These include the Qatar Fine Arts Society, Visual Art Centre, Qatar Photographic Society, Childhood Cultural Centre, Theatre Society and Qatar Music Academy. The QMA (Qatar Museums Authority) manages the QMA Gallery in Katara. The buildings and facilities at Katara were deliberately arranged randomly in order to look and feel like a traditional Qatari Al Fereej. We will have a visit inside the Opera House and Drama Theatre (pending availability).

Then a drive through The West Bay, considered one of the most prominent districts of Doha, being the latest district to be built. West Bay includes many modern buildings unlike other older districts and some of the tallest skyscrapers are here including Al Quds Endowment Tower, which has yet to be completed.

Onward to visit the interesting Mathaf-Arab Museum of Modern Art <http://www.mathaf.org.qa/en/> (open 9 am-6 pm). Afterwards, we drive through “Education City,” and pass by the university.

Continue to the Aspire Zone, also known as Doha Sports City, is a 250-hectare (2.5 square kilometers) sporting complex located in Al Waab district of Doha. It was established as an international sports destination in 2003 and in the following year an educational centre for the development of sporting champions (the ASPIRE Academy for Sports Excellence) was opened. The complex contains several sporting venues, mostly constructed in preparation for the 2006 Asian Games. The Aspire Dome is the world's largest indoor multi-purpose sports hall and contains 13 different playing fields. Aspire Zone is also home to Doha's tallest structure, the Aspire Tower. The complex is an important feature in the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid submitted by the Qatar Football Association, and it was central to the Doha bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics put forward by the Qatar Olympic Committee. **The stadium itself is not open to public; construction preparation for world cup 2022.**

Lunch in Aspire Zone at the very pleasant Sugar & Spice Restaurant next to Aspire Park. Soups, salads, sandwiches, traditional Arabic dishes. Pay direct, prices \$12-18, they accept credit cards.

Across the street is the interesting Villaggio Mall. The interior is designed to resemble Venice, complete with a canal and gondolas. The artwork and architecture is wonderfully frivolous; akin to the Venetian Resort Hotel in Vegas.

We stop at the nearby 360 Degrees Restaurant (which rotates around 360) in the Torch Hotel to enjoy sweeping views and interior design. Meals here are quite expensive starting at about \$50. It's worth a visit just to see the interior of the hotel and the viewing deck.

Afterwards, (about a 20 min drive) we enjoy a tour the fascinating Al Shaqab Equestrian Center. This is the training center for the prized Arabian horses. We will see where they train (on a horse treadmill and swimming pool!) and where they live. If our timing works out, we may also be able to see some sort of performance or at least watch the horses with their trainers.

Return to the hotel. Enjoy the rest of the day independently.

**Nov 22 Day 9 DEPART.** Transfer to airport. Most flights depart at 8 or 8:40 am.

**Exclusive Price for travelers on our Arabian Peninsula and Saudi Arabia Tours.**

**From Arabian Peninsula ( x days):** \$3075 based on min 4 people, **Single room Supplement:** \$565. **From Saudi Arabia (X days).**

**Plus air tickets:** Abu Dhabi-Bahrain – Kuwait-Doha (**estimate/subject to change**) \$550-600

We will book the tickets within the tour for you so that everyone is on the same flight.

**To join this tour as a stand-alone, please inquire about price.**

**Includes:**

Accommodation with daily breakfast

3 nights in Bahrain: Rotana Hotel 5\* Diplomatic area <http://www.rotana.com>

2 nights in Kuwait: Copertorne Hotel 4\* <http://www.radissonblu.com/hotel-kuwait>

2 nights in Doha: Al Bidda Boutique Hotel/Souq Waqif <https://www.tivolihotels.com/en/qatar>

**OR Horizon Manor** 4\* by the Corniche, near old town <http://horizon-manor.dohaqatarhotels.com/en/>

Airport transfers, sightseeing transportation

Entrance fees, local guides in each city, bottled water during drives.

**Does Not Include:** air tickets (priced separately when booked), visa fees, lunches or dinners, travel insurance, tips to hotel or airport porters, guides and drivers, laundry, phone calls, drinks

**Notes:** Previous years we had Gulf States as a pre-tour rather than post-tour to our Arabian Peninsula tour. Currently there are issues in the Middle East concerning flights to/from Qatar and now the only direct ones are from Kuwait. Otherwise with the original itinerary we would have two of the 3 flights with connections wasting precious tour time plus adding a significant increase to the cost of these flights. We therefore change the sequence of the countries within the Gulf States tour after checking schedules to each country as well as international flight options with various sequences.

To make this new schedule work without adding any extra cost, you have one less overnight in Abu Dhabi, but we added an extra overnight in Doha since flights depart in the morning rather than evening (original itinerary as pre-tour had a flight to Dubai to start the main tour hence no hotel).

All visas are available on arrival. The flight schedules change frequently and without much notice, therefore the sequence of activities is subject to change.

Museums and many sites are open from 9 am-12 or 1 pm and 3 or 4 pm – 8 pm, closed on Friday. Your guide may re-sequence the activities to coordinate best with the opening hours and your desired time to be spent at each place.

The lunches & dinners are not included simply because they wanted to charge us between \$40-\$65 per lunch! Though I requested a restaurant of quality cuisine and ambiance but not an overpriced tourist restaurant. Your guide will take you to nice reasonably priced (\$15-20) restaurant conveniently located near the sites you are visiting for lunch and you have freedom to select from a menu (pay direct) rather than a pre-set meal—same for everyone, or a buffet.

Sequence of activities and sites mentioned are subject to change due to situations in the countries. Sites are subject to closure without advanced notice. If sites mentioned are closed we will offer alternate sites.

Flight schedules within the tour are subject to change.