



HR DELIVERY
Making Sure HR Delivers

GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 04

OMAN

People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



**Understand the country.
Know the context.**

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Oman

OCTOBER 2026



START HERE

Understanding Oman

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. Oman deserves that attention: a Muscat office, a Sohar industrial site and a Salalah tourism business belong to the same country, but not to the same daily working environment.

This brief brings together the country's background, people, workforce, economy, important employers and everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or helping colleagues settle into Oman. The aim is to make the context clearer while leaving room for people themselves to explain what matters to them.

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Read the dates as well as the numbers

This edition is dated 7 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Numbered references lead to the source register. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

The country at a glance

A maritime country with mountains, desert and several distinct economic centres.

309,500

square kilometres
national area ^[1]

5.443m

residents
September 2026 ^[1]

US\$2.6008

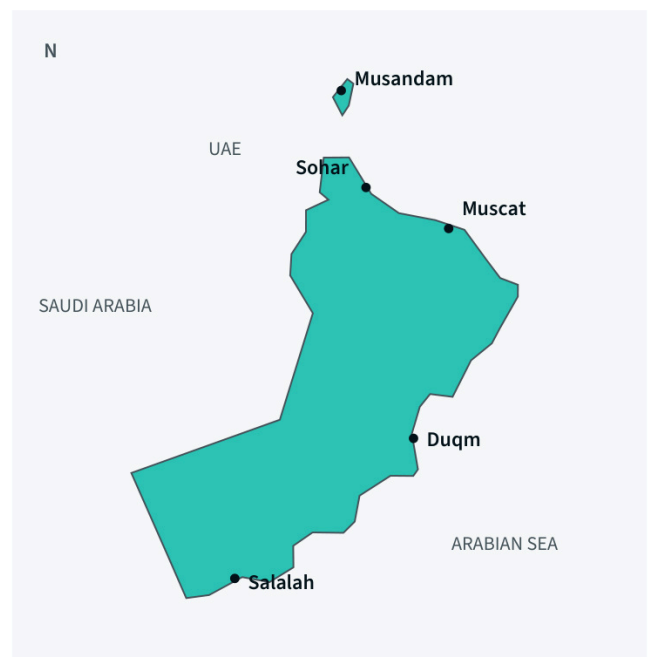
per Omani rial
official fixed parity ^[10]

Facing the Indian Ocean

Oman occupies the south-east of the Arabian Peninsula, with coasts on the Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea. It borders the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Musandam overlooks the Strait of Hormuz, while the main coast connects the country to long-established Indian Ocean trading routes. ^{[1][2]}

Muscat is a starting point

Government, finance and professional services are concentrated in an extended coastal urban area. Mutrah's harbour, Ruwi's commercial district and newer business areas towards the airport have different characters. A Muscat address alone does not establish an employee's commuting time or a visitor's site-access arrangements. ^{[2][36]}



Simplified country locator. Musandam is separated from the mainland by the UAE. Small enclaves, coastlines and boundaries are generalised.

Capital / language

Muscat; Arabic is official and English is widely used. ^[1]

Time

UTC+4 throughout the year; no daylight saving. ^[1]

Climate

Hot summers; mountain variation and the Dhofar khareef. ^[2]

Where industrial and regional work happens

Sohar combines a port, free zone and industrial base. Duqm is a major industrial and logistics development on the Arabian Sea. Salalah connects a container port, free zone and visitor economy in Dhofar. These are different recruitment, housing and transport settings, not simply extensions of the capital. ^{[20][36]}

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

A modern state with a long memory

Trade, seafaring and regional connections sit behind the modern energy economy.

Before oil revenues

Oman's story reaches back to copper trading, frankincense routes, farming communities and maritime links with India and East Africa. Ports were places of exchange long before modern oil production. Forts, irrigation systems and trading settlements remain part of a living identity, not simply a collection of visitor attractions. ^{[3][36]}

The modern development period

Sultan Qaboos bin Said's reign, from 1970 to 2020, is associated with a major expansion of schools, healthcare, roads and state institutions. Sultan Haitham bin Tarik succeeded him in January 2020. Oman Vision 2040 now provides the national reference for planning from 2021 to 2040. ^{[3][4][6]}

Institutions today

Oman is a hereditary monarchy headed by Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The Basic Statute issued in 2021 sets out the state framework. The Council of Oman comprises the appointed State Council and elected Shura Council. National institutions work alongside 11 governorates with distinct local geographies and priorities. ^{[1][2][4][5]}

Continuity and wider connections

The country's trading history helps explain its outward-looking relationships. Modernisation can sit beside pride in local heritage, religious life and community. For a newcomer, listening to how people describe their region and family connections is more revealing than assuming every Gulf workplace shares one culture. ^{[3][36]}



Timeline: national history and state framework ^{[3][4][5]}; Vision 2040 planning period ^[6].

Why the history still matters

Change is easier to understand when it recognises what people value as well as what they want to improve. National capability, regional opportunity and continuity of identity belong in the same conversation. International experience is useful, but it is not a substitute for understanding local experience.

Who lives and works in Oman?

Omani careers and international labour both shape the employment story.

3.034m

Omani residents
November 2025 ^[8]

2.323m

non-Omani residents
same register and date ^[8]

43.4%

non-Omani share
calculated, same base ^[8]

A population, not an employee count

NCSI's November 2025 register records 5,357,728 residents: 3,034,368 Omanis and 2,323,360 expatriates. Those figures include children and people outside employment. The newer September 2026 total on page 3 is a separate observation, not the denominator for this earlier nationality split. ^{[1][8]}

Geography changes the labour market

The same register shows Omanis represented 38.8% of Muscat's population, compared with 56.6% nationally. Industrial sites, coastal cities and remote operations draw on different talent pools. They may also involve organised transport, accommodation or rotational arrangements that a national average cannot describe. ^{[8][20]}

National participation and skills

Vision 2040 connects employment with skills, productivity and opportunities across the governorates. Employers need suitable roles and realistic routes to competence as well as compliance with nationalisation requirements. A new entrant's success depends partly on the work available and the manager's ability to help them learn. ^[7]

The human perspective

An Omani graduate, a technician on a remote site and a specialist arriving with children can all be important to one employer. Their practical needs will differ. Clear pay, dependable supervision, transport and time with family can matter as much as a policy. Nationality alone does not tell you what support a person needs.

REGISTERED RESIDENTS BY NATIONALITY / NOVEMBER 2025



Calculated from NCSI counts on the same date. Population shares, not employment or labour-force participation rates. ^[8]

Wealth, diversification and exposure

Energy, logistics and a broader private sector need to be read together.

+1.6%

real GDP growth
2024 outcome ^[9]

+3.3%

non-oil GDP growth
2024 outcome ^[9]

0.6%

average inflation
2024 outcome ^[9]

The scale of the economy

NCSI records nominal GDP of about OMR41.2bn in 2024. The IMF's January 2026 assessment reports 1.6% real growth and low inflation for that year. Nominal size and real growth are different measures; neither is a forecast of demand for a client's current project. ^{[8][9]}

Energy remains a foundation

PDO, OQ and Oman LNG anchor producers, contractors, engineering firms and suppliers. Employment extends into maintenance, logistics and specialist support. A business need not sell oil itself to be affected by the energy investment cycle or the timing of a major operating project. ^{[11][12][13]}

Diversification has a geography

Sohar, Duqm and Salalah connect manufacturing and trade to ports and investment zones. Tourism draws on the coast, mountains and Dhofar, while fisheries and agriculture remain part of the productive economy. This is a geographically spread story, not one concentrated solely in a capital-city business district. ^{[2][20][36]}

Investment and public finances

Oman Investment Authority manages state investment interests and supports domestic economic development. Vision 2040 gives the private sector a larger role. Sovereign investment, government spending and an individual company's hiring plan are connected, but they are not the same measure of demand or the same pool of funding. ^{[6][19]}

Read the reference period, not just the headline

The cards use 2024 outcomes from a January 2026 assessment. Later estimates and forecasts have different dates and assumptions. For staffing decisions, distinguish a functioning operation from an announced investment, and a funded contract from an ambition in a national strategy.

Oman's direction creates opportunities in established industries as well as new ones. For HR, the useful question is where demand is actually materialising: in an operating plant, a service business, a construction phase or a new commercial team. Each implies a different workforce need.

Where economic activity takes place

National ambition is delivered through ports, industries, communities and employers.

Energy and industrial production

PDO's oil and gas operations, OQ's integrated energy businesses and LNG processing near Sur create demand for technical, operational and commercial capability. Sohar and Duqm add refining, manufacturing and industrial supply chains. Permanent operations and project-based construction require different workforce arrangements. ^{[11][12][13][20]}

Ports, shipping and logistics

Oman's position on Indian Ocean routes supports port, maritime and logistics businesses. Asyad's activities span shipping and wider logistics services. Sohar, Salalah and Duqm have different cargo and industrial roles; access, shift cover, safety and the final journey to a site matter alongside the headquarters address. ^{[16][20]}

Finance and business services

Bank Muscat and other banks support households, commerce and corporate investment. Professional-services firms also serve state-linked companies, industrial projects and private businesses. Banking, risk, finance, procurement and digital capabilities are relevant beyond the financial institutions themselves. The useful comparator is the role and operating context. ^{[15][19][24]}

Tourism, hospitality and heritage

Muscat's waterfront, the Hajar mountains and Dhofar's khareef season support different visitor experiences. Hotels are only part of the employment story: transport, destination operations, food services and local businesses also matter. Seasonal demand should not automatically be translated into permanent headcount. ^[36]

Hydrogen and future industry

Hydrom coordinates development of Oman's green-hydrogen sector. Renewable energy, ports and industrial users connect to that ambition. Announced projects indicate direction, but technical studies, financing and commissioning stages determine when particular skills are needed. A project pipeline is not a list of vacancies already available. ^[39]

Education, health and digital services

Sultan Qaboos University, other education providers and public and private health services support specialist employment and national capability. Telecommunications and digital infrastructure serve every sector. Qualifications, professional registration and the ability to apply knowledge at work matter alongside recruitment volumes. ^{[14][21][22]}

Oman Vision 2040: a national direction, not a company forecast

Vision 2040 connects people and society, economic development, governance and the environment. Its priorities include national capabilities, the labour market and a competitive private sector. Five-year planning translates that direction into programmes; it does not guarantee that every proposed role or project will proceed. ^{[6][7]}

Country context becomes useful when connected to the client's sector, governorate, operating stage and actual source of revenue.

Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

Organisation	Business	Why it is useful to know
Petroleum Development Oman	Oil / gas	A principal operator. Direct employees and its substantial contractor ecosystem need separate workforce analysis. ^[11]
OQ	Integrated energy	US\$41.5bn consolidated revenue in 2025, rounded. Trading and international activities are part of the group scope. ^[12]
Oman LNG	LNG production	Operations at Qalhat, near Sur; specialist production, maintenance and export-related employment. ^[13]
Bank Muscat	Banking	OMR15.13bn consolidated assets at year-end 2025, rounded. A balance-sheet measure, not revenue or workforce size. ^[15]
Omantel	Telecoms / digital	OMR3.41bn group revenue in 2025, including Zain. Domestic operations revenue was OMR676.1m; the scopes differ. ^[14]
Asyad Group	Shipping / logistics	Ports, shipping and logistics services. Individual operating companies and locations have different employment settings. ^[16]
Oman Air	Aviation	The national airline connects Muscat internationally, combining safety-critical, service and commercial roles. ^[17]
Sohar Aluminium	Industry	Aluminium production within Sohar, with engineering, operational and supply-chain employment. ^[18]

A useful distinction for HR

A group's global revenue or workforce does not establish its Oman employment. Nor does size make every subsidiary a suitable pay comparator. Identify the legal employer, location, occupation and job level before using a national champion as a benchmark.

Beyond the company names

Public services, investment bodies, education and smaller businesses matter too.

Government is more than a regulator

Ministries and governorates set policy and deliver services, while state-linked businesses operate commercially. A ministry, an OIA portfolio company and a privately owned supplier should not be treated as one employment model. Budgets, accountabilities and routes to approving a people decision can differ considerably. ^{[5][19]}

Education and national capability

Sultan Qaboos University is a major public university and research institution. The wider system includes technical, vocational and private provision. For employers, relevant programmes, accreditation and partnerships matter more than assuming one qualification automatically demonstrates readiness for every role. Professional experience also deserves careful attention. ^{[21][34]}

Healthcare as an institution and employer

The Ministry of Health and private providers are part of both the service system and employment market. Clinical work carries licensing and professional requirements. An employer's insurance promise should be explained separately from access to public services or the existence of a hospital near the workplace. ^{[22][34]}

Beyond the national champions

The SME Development Authority supports entrepreneurship and smaller enterprises. These organisations may have different recruitment needs and management capacity from a large industrial group. Local suppliers and owner-managed firms belong in a country brief as much as the better-known national companies. Programme eligibility should be checked for the business concerned. ^[23]

OIA

state investment
portfolio and development ^[19]

OPAZ

economic zones
industrial operating routes ^[20]

SME Authority

enterprise support
smaller business development ^[23]

Reading an organisation in context

Ownership is the beginning of the conversation, not the answer. Ask who controls the budget, who employs the staff and who can approve a change. A shared national identity or shareholder does not establish identical reward policies, decision rights or management practice.

How the operating context works

Operating routes, business activities and employment permissions all need attention.

Choose the operating route carefully

Oman permits full foreign ownership in many activities, subject to licensing and restricted activities. Invest Oman provides an official starting point. Company registration is not permission to employ every occupation or deliver every professional service. Check the actual activity, employing entity and approvals before making staffing commitments. ^{[24][28]}

Zones have their own proposition

OPAZ oversees economic and free zones including Duqm, Sohar and Salalah. Their propositions include land, infrastructure and specified incentives. A headline tax holiday or ownership benefit should not be assumed to apply to every mainland business or every activity undertaken by a zone company. Eligibility and conditions matter. ^[20]

Tax: current and future rules differ

The standard corporate income-tax rate is generally 15%, subject to the applicable provisions; VAT is generally 5%. A separate personal income-tax law has been enacted for commencement in 2028. Describing Oman as permanently 'tax-free' would therefore be misleading for businesses and long-term international assignments. ^{[25][26][27]}

Currency and international packages

The Omani rial is fixed at US\$2.6008 per rial. This provides a stable dollar reference, not a constant value against every employee's home currency. An unchanged OMR salary can produce a different value of overseas savings or remittances as other currencies move. ^[10]

Keep the 2028 tax change separate from current payroll

The enacted personal income-tax framework concerns specified income where annual total income exceeds OMR42,000, with a 5% rate on taxable income. It is scheduled to begin in 2028, not October 2026. Scope, deductions and implementing guidance require case-specific review. ^[27]

Establish the legal employer, permitted activity, work location and Omanisation requirements before recommending an arrangement. A business licence, residence document and permission to perform a particular job answer different questions. This matters for external consultants as well as permanent employees. ^{[24][28][33]}

The rules behind working life

A short orientation to the general private-sector framework, with important boundaries.

Royal Decree 53/2023 introduced the Labour Law. Government employment and categories governed by separate provisions should not be assumed to follow identical rules. Social Protection Fund arrangements also affect leave and benefits. Confirm coverage before using the general baseline below. ^{[28][29][30]}

Topic	General baseline for covered employees
Ordinary hours	Generally 8 daily / 40 weekly; Muslim employees in Ramadan: 6 daily / 30 weekly. ^[28]
Probation	Up to 3 months for monthly-paid staff; up to 2 months for others, as agreed. ^[28]
Annual leave	At least 30 days on gross wage; ordinarily taken after six months of service. ^[28]
Sick leave	Up to 182 days yearly, with pay tiers of 100%, 75%, 50% and 35%; conditions apply. ^[28]
Maternity / paternity	98 days of maternity leave; seven days of paternity leave under the statutory provisions. ^{[28][29]}
Notice after probation	Indefinite contracts: generally 30 days for monthly-paid staff; 15 days for others, unless longer agreed. ^[28]
End-of-service	Eligible workers outside social-protection coverage: at least one basic monthly wage per year; check scheme transition. ^{[28][30]}

General orientation only. Contract type, statutory coverage and benefit-scheme implementation matter. Company terms may be more generous.

Social protection is not one uniform scheme

The SPF describes separate insurance branches and a provident arrangement for non-Omani workers. Coverage and commencement differ by programme and category. Confirm current implementation and accrued-service treatment, rather than assuming every expatriate employee has moved from employer-paid gratuity to a funded savings scheme. ^{[29][30]}

Joining the workforce

National participation and international recruitment are both part of the direction.

Omanisation reaches into occupations

Omanisation concerns the employment and development of Omani nationals. Requirements vary by activity, occupation and employer circumstances; some jobs are reserved. Decision 501/2024 introduced additional restrictions with phased dates. Meeting an establishment-level ratio does not replace checking whether a particular occupation may be filled by a non-Omani. ^{[28][31]}

Capability is the longer-term goal

Vision 2040 seeks a productive labour market and opportunities based on competence. Career pathways and skill transfer matter alongside recruitment. A graduate needs meaningful work and support; an experienced national employee needs a credible route to greater responsibility, not simply another training course. Managers help turn that ambition into everyday experience. ^[7]

Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers recruit Omanis, eligible residents and people overseas. Work visas depend on labour authorisation, with professional requirements for some occupations. The job description, permit occupation and actual work should agree. Permission to visit Oman is not the same as permission to undertake paid consulting or employment. ^{[28][33]}

Packages need a clear explanation

Describe basic pay, allowances, variable pay and family benefits separately. A Muscat office appointment and a remote operational role may need different support. Housing, transport, flights or schooling are not universal entitlements because another employer provides them. Explain both what is included in the offer and what is not.

Reliable wage payment is part of the employment proposition

The Wage Protection System supports monitoring of salary payment through the banking system. Accurate contract data and timely transfers matter alongside an attractive offer. Minimum-wage rules for specified national categories should not be confused with a market salary for every occupation. ^[32]

There is no single useful 'Oman salary' without a role, level, governorate, sector and package definition. Compare base pay, guaranteed allowances, variable pay and household costs on the same basis, rather than turning a handful of advertisements into a national benchmark.

The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an offer into a real life.

A move involves a household

A new role can be welcome and the first month still feel unsettling. Housing, a partner's plans, school places and unfamiliar paperwork arrive together. Helpful employers explain these matters before travel and provide a named contact. Clear expectations are kinder than leaving a family to discover exclusions after accepting the offer.

Housing and the actual work location

Muscat stretches along the coast, and a home near one business district may not suit another. Sohar, Duqm and Salalah are separate relocation decisions. Test the commute, school route and site access before choosing housing. Operational assignments may require organised transport or a different accommodation arrangement. ^{[2][20][34]}

Schools and childcare

Public and private schools include international options. Check curriculum continuity, year-group availability, fees and additional learning support. A school allowance does not guarantee a place or cover nursery and transport costs. Verify admissions and documentation with the actual school before treating education arrangements as settled. ^[34]

Healthcare and family cover

Check the policy, not just the word 'medical'. Ask about eligible dependants, provider networks, co-payments and specialist treatment. Public-service access and private insurance are different arrangements. A visiting consultant should arrange suitable travel and medical protection rather than assume a client's employee policy applies to an external adviser. ^{[22][34]}

Getting around

Mwasalat operates city and intercity bus services; other journeys may require a car, taxi or employer transport. The useful choice depends on the worksite and timetable, not simply whether a city has a bus route. Allow for summer conditions and verify driving requirements for the intended residence or visit status. ^{[34][35]}

A realistic cost-of-living view

Budget separately for rent, deposits, schooling, childcare, utilities, transport, insurance and travel. Costs vary by location and family choices. Relevant, dated quotations are more dependable than a national average or an assurance that a familiar Gulf salary will automatically go further. Include the one-off costs of arrival as well as monthly spending.

For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travelling. Check entry and work-permission requirements for the activities you will undertake, alongside current travel advice and insurance. Previous visits do not establish the correct route for a new assignment. ^{[33][34]}

Working with consideration

Country knowledge should help people feel understood, not categorised.

Make room for relationships

Omani hospitality and conversation can be part of professional as well as social life. Allow time for introductions, show interest in the organisation and explain the purpose of the visit. Courtesy and dependable follow-through are more useful than trying to perform an exaggerated version of local etiquette. ^[36]

Communicate without assumptions

Arabic is official and English is widely used. That does not mean every employee can interpret a technical policy confidently in English. Ask which language serves the audience, particularly for safety information, contracts and sensitive discussions. A fluent meeting room can conceal different needs elsewhere in the workforce. ^[1]

Respect the setting

Islam is central to national life, but Oman's communities and individuals are not interchangeable. Modest professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful conduct are sensible starting points. A colleague's nationality, region or religion is not a complete explanation of how they will work or respond to change. ^{[1][36]}

Working across the year

Sunday to Thursday is a common office pattern, while operating rosters differ. Ramadan and Eid affect work and family routines. A 2025 decree set National Day dates at 20 and 21 November; older references may still say 18 November. Check officially announced holiday arrangements for the particular year. ^{[28][37]}

Climate is an operating condition

The midday outdoor-work restriction runs from 12:30 to 15:30 in June, July and August, subject to the applicable rules. It does not make all other hours safe. Shade, hydration, rest and supervision still matter. Dhofar's khareef produces a different local climate and visitor pattern. ^{[2][38]}

See beyond the meeting room

Mutrah, Nizwa, the Hajar mountains, Sur and Dhofar reveal different sides of Oman. Curiosity about the place helps a visitor understand the communities where colleagues live. It is an opportunity to listen and learn, rather than another checklist to fit between an airport and a meeting room. ^[36]

A brief, not a stereotype

Oman's regions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use country context to ask thoughtful questions and interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

01 Oman Foreign Ministry

Key facts, population, area, language and time
fm.gov.om

02 Oman Foreign Ministry

Geography and regional context
fm.gov.om

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15 Bank Muscat

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bankmuscat.om

16 Asyad Group

Ports and logistics operating network
asyad.com

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National airline and corporate information
omanair.com

18 Sohar Aluminium

Company profile and industrial operations
sohar-aluminium.com

19 Oman Investment Authority

State investment and domestic portfolio
oia.gov.om

20 OPAZ

Economic zones and industrial context
opaz.gov.om

What the company figures mean

Company figures retain their year and group scope. Revenue, profit and assets are different measures. These profiles are not a ranking of domestic workforce size or employer quality.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

Source notes and publication details

Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

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squ.edu.om

22 Ministry of Health

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24 Invest Oman

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Personal income-tax law; starts in 2028
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spf.gov.om

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spf.gov.om

31 Ministry of Labour / Decree

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32 Gov.om / Central Bank of Oman

Wage Protection System and salary transfers
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33 Royal Oman Police

Employment visa requirements
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34 UK Government

Living in Oman: practical relocation guidance
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35 Mwasalat

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39 Hydrom

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Data note. Page 3 uses the Foreign Ministry's September 2026 population observation. Page 5 uses NCSI November 2025 nationality counts and matching percentages. Economic cards use 2024 outcomes in the IMF January 2026 assessment. Company figures preserve the stated year and group scope.

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