



**OUTWARD BOUND OMAN™**

unlocking human potential



**Desert Study Centre**

**A Teacher's Guide**



This **Teachers' Guide** provides prospective schools and their staff with a wealth of information about using the Desert Centre as a base for their fieldwork experiences. Through this guide, teachers will realise that geography, ecology and science fieldwork in the desert is not only a highly accessible and practical option for their students, but a unique means to provide independent and topic-applied learning experiences that will compliment and stimulate study once back in the classroom.

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## Outward Bound Oman: A Brief History

Outward Bound was founded in 1941 by the naval captain Laurence Holt, and the educationalist Kurt Hahn. At this time, we provided training for young and inexperienced sailors who were drafted into the navy in World War II, to help prepare them for a tough life at sea.

After the war it was felt that the courses offered by Outward Bound were valuable for society in general, and Outward Bound expanded rapidly around the world. Today there are Outward Bound centres in more than 30 countries. The work of Outward Bound has never been as relevant as it is today, and each year some 250,000 people take part in an Outward Bound course somewhere in the world.

In May 2009, Outward Bound was launched in Oman, the first Outward Bound school in any Arabic speaking country, and in 2014 it was further established by Ministerial Decision, operating as an educational foundation under the Ministry of Social Development.

In 2017, the Desert Centre opened, providing a residential base for course participants as well as a suite of classrooms and learning facilities for schools and colleges to use for field study opportunities.



## Why choose Outward Bound Oman?

**Outward Bound Oman** are leaders in the Arabic speaking world for the provision of opportunities for young people to experience the desert, its surrounding environment and its people. Over 11,000 people have undertaken courses with Outward Bound Oman and the organisation is well-versed in preparing students and teachers for the best possible fieldwork. Here are some of the reasons people choose Outward Bound Oman.



**The People:** From the headquarter office team to the hosts at the Desert Centre, our staff know the desert environment and how best to advise you in your choices of fieldwork locations and activities. Their experience will inform every layer of your decision making and help make your field trip to the desert a memorable one.

**The Place:** The Desert Centre is located only two hours from Muscat yet is still in the midst of the dunes of the Sharqiya Sands Desert. This makes it the perfect place for groups who wish to undertake field studies in an extreme environment and at the same time be able to return to a safe and comfortable base at the end of a hot day.



**The Process:** Teachers will already be aware of the importance of bringing the theory students have learnt about in the classroom to life through real encounters in the field. However joining Outward Bound Oman for fieldwork brings far more out of students than just achievement in a relatively narrow academic field. The residential experience and proximity to nature develops students' independent learning skills and gives them a wider appreciation of how the desert forms part of a much bigger system, both environmentally and socially.

*Our students loved the accommodation, including the option to sleep on roof platforms under the stars... wonderful staff and stunning desert—perfect!*

Bill Cordon, The Sultan's School

*The Desert Centre provides an exciting learning environment with fabulous facilities and an inspirational atmosphere - we will be back!*

Julie Askew, Artist



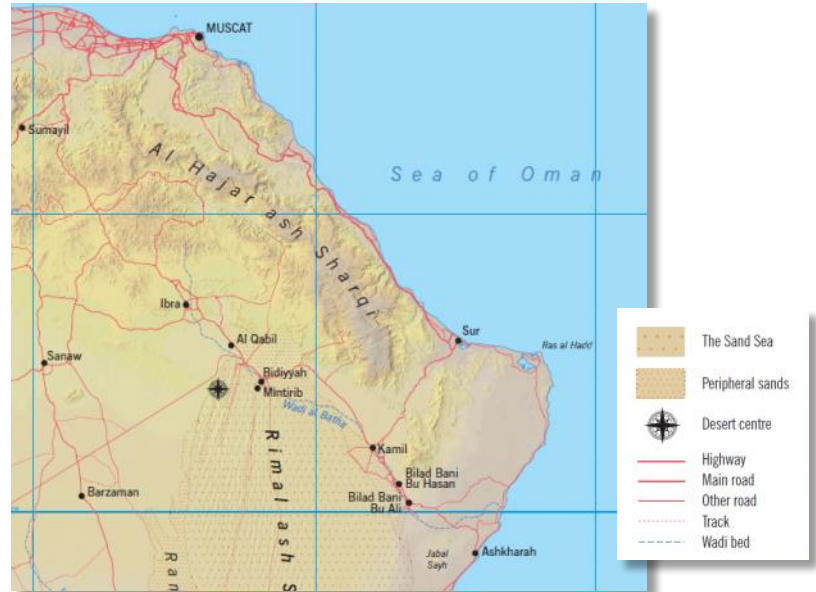
## Location and Facilities

Whilst managed centrally from our Muscat office, the Desert Centre in the Sharqiya Sands is the base of all fieldwork from Outward Bound Oman. Roughly two hours' drive from central Muscat, the Centre combines the experience of being nestled in the dunes with the knowledge that amenities and larger facilities are within easy driving distance.

The Centre boasts an impressive range of classrooms and break-out spaces for school groups to utilise. Four outdoor teaching pavilions are complimented by three rooms with full projection capability, one of which also serves as a field laboratory. Students sleep in dormitory style rooms with shared bathrooms while staff enjoy en suite facilities. The Centre also boasts two sleeping decks where students can sleep under the stars for a true desert experience. The communal self-catering kitchen is fully equipped with modern appliances for groups to prepare and serve their own meals.

The Desert Centre has been designed to minimise the effect of the heat of the desert on the groups that stay there. Thick walls and small windows keep heating from solar insolation to a minimum and the central courtyard provides both shade throughout the day and a funnel for cooling desert breezes to pass through the grounds. All rooms have fans and air conditioning units.

A firepit, amphitheatre and majlis provide areas for reflection and story telling.

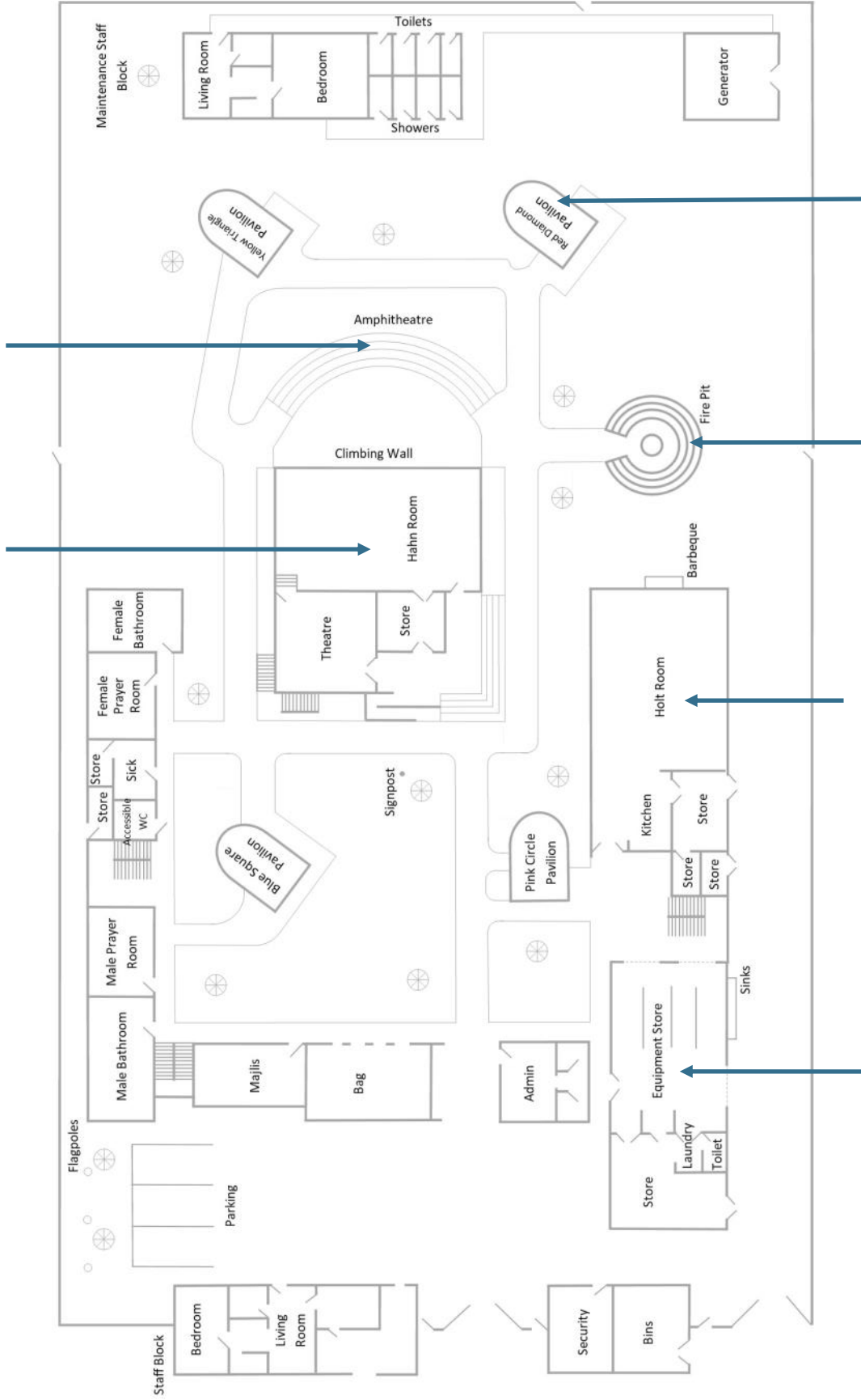


Access to the Desert Centre from Muscat is via a well maintained tarmac road. Roughly 12km from the Centre this changes to a flat sand track that provides inspiring views of the dunes in which the Centre sits. Vehicles can park securely inside the Centre compound.



# Location and Facilities - Ground Floor

The Hahn Room is a dedicated laboratory and teaching space, with projector, whiteboard and seating for 40 students. The adjoining AV Theatre gives a darkened projection hall with tiered seating.



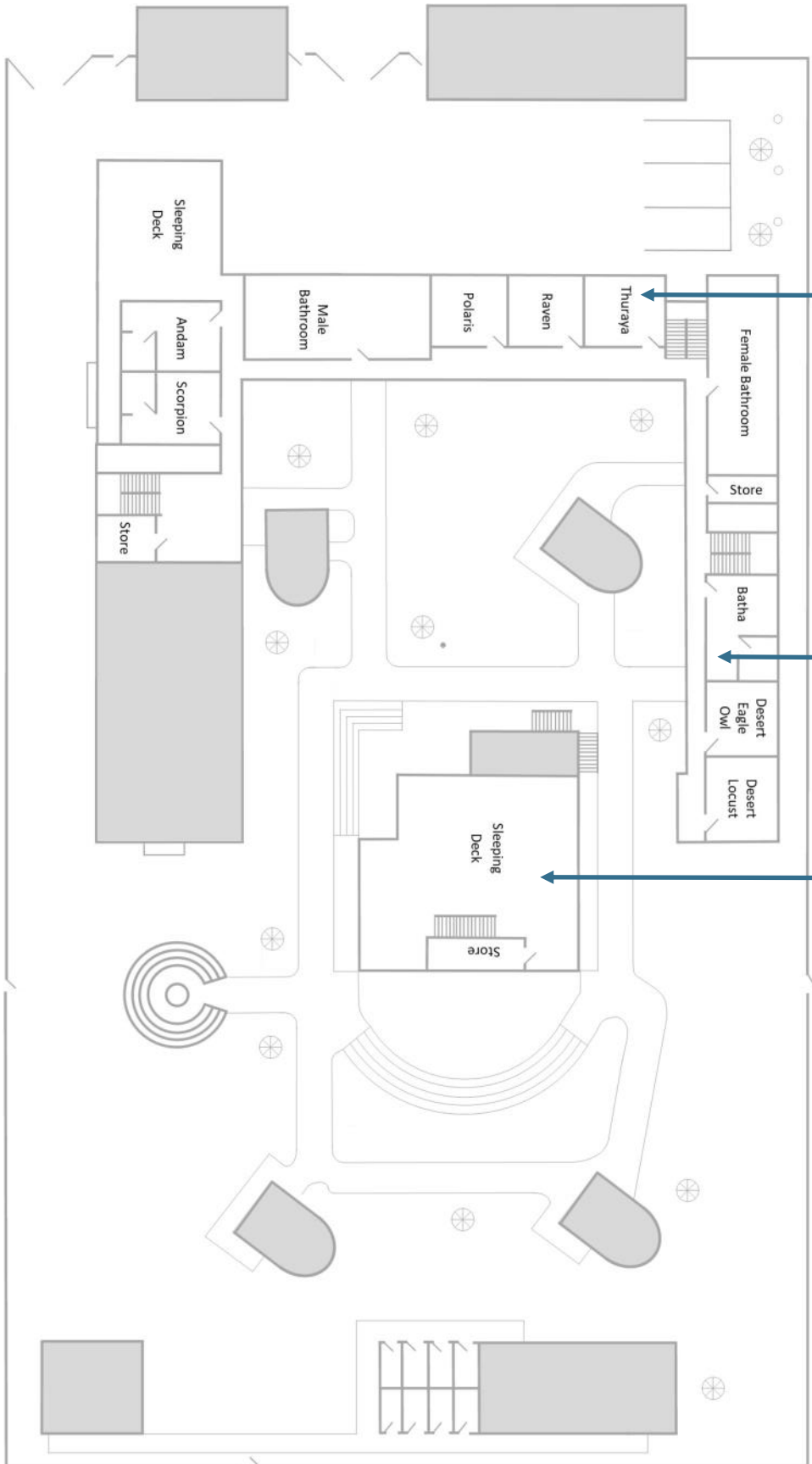
The store holds a wide variety of fieldwork and camping equipment for use by visiting groups.

The Holt room serves as both a classroom and indoor dining space for up to 50 people. It is equipped with a projector, screen and white board.

The Firepit provides a great space for story telling reflective moments

The Centre has four outdoor pavilions that can act as break-out spaces for smaller groups

# Location and Facilities - First Floor



Student bedrooms consist of two five-bed sleeping platforms

Staff bedrooms have well proportioned en-suite facilities

Two sleeping decks provide unrivalled views of the stars and a truly memorable desert experience

## Caring for the Environment



One thing that makes the Desert Centre stand out is its commitment to eco-centre principles. Solar panels contribute a substantial amount of the Centre's energy needs and energy saving measures are deployed throughout the site. Groups who stay at the Desert Centre are taught how, and encouraged, to save energy throughout their stay.

Water saving procedures and devices are also deployed, with low flow toilets and taps throughout all the bathrooms. During their stay, students gain a real understanding of sustainable resource use as well as Outward Bound Oman's adage 'Leave No Trace' and will return to school with a range of techniques to make their actions more environmentally sustainable.

## Staffing and Supervision

While field studies courses to the Desert Centre are self-led, staff are on hand at the Centre to support, give advice and host visiting groups. All Outward Bound Oman staff have experience of working with young people as well as formal training in safe guarding and child protection. All staff also undergo police checks before they are recruited.

It is expected that a visiting school will provide enough staff for the minimum adult to student ratio



required. Outward Bound Oman recommend this to be one adult to every ten students. While Outward Bound Oman staff are by no means field studies tutors, in certain circumstances Desert Centre staff may be available to act as responsible adults to allow schools to meet their required adult to student ratio. Please discuss this with the Outward Bound Oman Office team before making a booking.

## Field Equipment and Human Resources

The Desert Centre is equipped with a wide range of up to date field and laboratory equipment to which visiting groups will have full access. Equipment needs should be discussed with the Outward Bound Oman Office team prior to booking.

Equipment	Quantity available
1 : 50000 maps of the local area	10
GPS devices	2
A4 clipboard	40
Ranging pole	12
Gun clinometer	10
Hand-held anemometer	3
Digital stopwatch	3
Sediment sieve	2
5kg balance	2
100m tape measure	4
Pen thermometer	4
Soil thermometer	4
10 x 10 grid quadrat	8
x15 magnification hand lens	6
Sampling tray	6
Insect pots	20
Pooter traps	6
Bat detector	1
Moth trap	1
Camera trap	1

Staff at the Desert Centre have made good working links with many members of the local community. If required, it can be arranged for students can visit and carry out stakeholder interviews with the managers of a local tourist camp as well as local Bedouin people.



# A Typical Field Course

First Day	Interim Days	Last Day
<p>Meet Outward Bound Oman staff at OBOHQ</p> <p>Transported or escorted to Desert Centre (size of group depending)</p> <p>Stop off at local supermarket to allow group to purchase food for the course duration</p> <p>Arrival at Centre</p> <p>Welcome and orientation discussion with Centre host</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>Afternoon class time - preparation for the field course</p> <p>Relaxation</p> <p>Evening meal</p> <p>Team games</p> <p>Bedtime and lights out</p>	<p>Wake up bell</p> <p>Breakfast (and preparation of packed lunch if needed)</p> <p>Introductory class time</p> <p>Collection of field equipment and packing vehicles</p> <p>Transportation to the field site</p> <p>Collection of field data / field observations</p> <p>Lunch back at the Centre or packed lunch in the field</p> <p>Further collection of field data / field observations</p> <p>Return to the Centre. Return field equipment to the stores</p> <p>Relaxation</p> <p>Processing of field data / class time</p> <p>Evening meal</p> <p>Storytelling and songs around the fire pit</p> <p>Bedtime (on the sleeping deck)</p>	<p>Wake up bell</p> <p>Breakfast (and preparation of packed lunch if needed)</p> <p>Pack up and vacate rooms. Pack vehicles</p> <p>Time for reflection and course evaluation</p> <p>Transported or escorted to OBOHQ</p>

## Meals and Food

All food and meals are self-catered in the Centre's well equipped kitchen. The kitchen has a large fridge-freezer unit as well as a multi-ring hob and oven.

All cutlery, crockery and utensils are provided, as is a basic staple larder.

Provision is made on the first day of the course for groups to purchase their food supplies.

# Curriculum Links and Fieldwork Ideas

Schools can study a variety of topics in the desert environment. Below is a sample of some of the possible areas for field study that teachers may wish to consider when they structure their course.

## Geography

- Dune processes and the variables that affect them
- Dune succession and their changes over time
- Local aeolian processes and dune changes
- Desert hydrology and management
- How the geology of the dunes changes
- Impact of desert camp based tourism and how it may change in the future
- The environmental impact of the Desert Centre



## Biology and Ecology

- The variety and diversity of animal life found in the desert
- The variety and diversity of plant life found in the desert
- How plant abundance changes through a dune system
- How desert plants are adapted to extreme conditions
- Niche habitats within the desert environment



## Social Studies

- How Bedouin people use the landscape and the challenges they face
- The adaptation of Bedouin people to the challenging desert
- The role of Bedouin people in the local economy over time
- Religion and belief systems in the desert
- The desert landscape as an inspiration for art and literature
- Storytelling and the importance of narrative in the desert



# The Booking Timeline

Every field studies course is unique but the following timeline may help teachers to plan their fieldwork with Outward Bound Oman. It is strongly recommended that school staff complete their necessary paperwork **a minimum of two weeks** before the start of their field course to allow Desert Centre staff to be able to prepare for their visit.



## Contact Us

To begin the booking process, contact us through one of the methods below. Please provide your name and contact details.

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