



The Sultanate of Oman adjoins both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, in the North, but is not actually a member of the U.A.E. To its West lies the vastness of Saudi Arabia, to the South is Yemen, and bordering its lengthy Eastern seaboard is the Indian Ocean.

In the last 400 years, it has been conquered at times by the Ottoman Turks, the Portuguese, the French and the British – but since 1970 has been ruled with enormous passion, skill and dexterity by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who has brought peace, stability, and prosperity to this increasingly important principality.

Unlike Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Oman is a country of many diverse landscapes, formed of stunning mountain ranges, wadis, long pristine beaches, and whitewashed buildings. But is devoid of the dreaded skyscraper, thus retaining its old world charm.

The pace of life is slower, it is spotlessly clean, and its people are welcoming, tolerant and friendly.



The horse has been part and parcel of Oman's culture for centuries – to wit the striking lifesize bronze statue of an Omani warrior, astride his rearing Arab stallion, and bedecked with falcon and musket, which greets admiring guests to the lobby of the Hyatt Hotel in Muscat, Oman's capital city.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who is Sandhurst educated, takes great pride in his many Arab horses, of every hue and discipline, all of which come under the overall control of the much revered Brigadier Abdulrazak Alshahwarzi, Commander of the Royal Cavalry Royal Court Affairs, based at Madinat Al

Adiyat, in Seeb, by the sea, and only a few kilometres from the centre of Muscat.

This large complex comprises an impressive racecourse, stabling for all the Sultan's Arab racehorses, showjumping and general riding facilities, extensive offices and accommodation for a staff of 900.

At present His Majesty has 80 Arab racehorses stabled at Seeb, and some thoroughbreds, which are trained by the charismatic and very able Philippe Barbe, formerly an assistant to Peter Walwyn in Lambourn, and a successful trainer in his native France.

The Royal Cavalry's Al Shareef did the Sultanate proud when winning Round 2 of the Arabian Triple Crown at Abu Dhabi on February 28<sup>th</sup>. This was in fact the second prestigious race in a prolific month for the Royal Cavalry, as Mutafani had also triumphed in the Group 3 Al Ruwais Sprint over 1000m on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Oman, 'The Pearl of Arabia', is proud of its heritage, but decidedly progressive, where trade and commerce are concerned. The International Airport at Muscat is undergoing a massive refurbishment, tourism is growing apace – and, from Racing's perspective, there is obvious potential. A new International Racecourse has been discussed, young jockeys from Oman are due to come to the BRS in Newmarket, later in 2010, and interest in the Thoroughbred is growing, albeit at a gradual pace.

Gavin Pritchard-Gordon

Gavin Pritchard-Gordon with Philippe Barbe and wife

