**DNHG trip to Qeshm Island (Iran) from Nov 29 to Dec 2 (National Day weekend)**

Qeshm is the largest Iranian island, situated in the strait of Hormuz, just a short flight from Dubai.

It has a long history going back to the Achaemenid Empire some 500 years BC.

It was always an important point for trading, navigation, ship building and pearling. However, nowadays it is more famous for its UNESCO protected Geopark sites illustrating the island’s interesting natural history (<http://qeshmgeopark.ir/en>).

Apart from geological features the island also has one of the biggest mangrove forests and rich wildlife.

Due to the arid climate, locals have invented interesting ways of water management with wells and cisterns scattered across the island. Of 59 villages and towns on the island most have preserved the old Bandari way of life: women still wear traditional dress and face masks and some houses are still cooled by badgirs (wind towers).

**But most importantly, Qeshm is a Duty Free zone and visas are not required to visit the island.**

All the paperwork will be done by the local agency and instead of visa your passport will be stamped with Qeshm airport entry/exit stamp.

**Qeshm Island 4-day programme**

**Friday, November 29**

17.00 Departure Flight from Terminal 2

17.10 Arrival to Qeshm, entry procedures

After the border formalities we will drive to our guesthouse, where we will sojourn for the next 3 nights. Our guesthouse is a beautiful traditional house with two open-air yards turned into a guesthouse. It is located in the center of the island, convenient for our day trips around the island.

We’ll have dinner in a local guesthouse.

**Saturday, November 30**

On Saturday we will visit the West side of the island. We will start on the North coast and will stop at different Geopark locations on the way: The **Valley of Statues** got the name from eroded mountain slopes that form different shapes – statues; next stop **Chahkuh Gorge** (name means mountain well) is a narrow canyon, a salt dome related anticline, that was later formed by water erosion, where water also created typical round ‘wells’. Locals dug additional wells in the gorge, to store water for dry season that are still in use.

We will then cross the island to the South coast and make a short stop at **Qazi Terrace**, another interesting geological formation. Our stop for lunch will be in a traditional local house on the south of the island.

In the afternoon we will visit **Salt Cave** (Namakdan Complex) and walk about 1 km into the salt cave.

Late afternoon we will visit **Port of Guran**, historically one of the most important shipyards for traditional boats (called lenj or tartari), where we will have a guided visit of the open-air museum and hear about the tradition of ship building and sea faring.

We will end the day with a cruise on one of the tartari boats, with traditional music, dance and fish dinner.

**Sunday, December 1**

We will start our Sunday exploration before breakfast with a 6 am trip to **Hara Mangrove Forest** and birdwatching. This early morning mangrove ride is one of the highlights of the trip – you can however skip it and stay in bed if you prefer, as we will return to the guesthouse for breakfast at 8 am.

After breakfast we will drive north, to visit **Laft Village**, a historic harbor, the closest point to the mainland (where a ferry jetty connects the island to the mainland) and a village of unique architectural style with traditional badgirs, wind towers. This village is also known for 366 wells, one for each day of the year, including leap years.

We will then cross the island to get to the south shore and visit **Naz Islands**\*, or playful islands – so-called as they are islands only at the high tide. We’ll stop for lunch in a local guesthouse in coastal town **Suza** and then proceed to another highlight of Qeshm Geopark, **Stars Valley**. Locals believed that this valley was created by falling stars (comets). Star Valley is another example of wind and water erosion process that, together with different hardness of layers, created this incredible landscape.

We will then stop in a nearby village, **Burke Khalaf** for some souvenir shopping at women’s cooperative that was organized locally to preserve the traditional craft of embroidery as well as give women an income and the opportunity to socialize. We will have the opportunity to get familiar with the art project of Iranian artist Ahmed Nadalian involving local women.

Before returning to our overnight guesthouse we will stop for dinner in a local guesthouse.

\*Changes in itinerary might be necessary depending on the tide, as islands are only reachable by low tide.

**Monday, December 2**

This will be our last day on the island. After breakfast we will drive to **Roof of Qeshm**, the plateau above the island with views over both North and South coast, as well as some of the valleys. There’s about a 40 min walk on a reasonably steep, sun exposed path leading to the plateau.

We’ll then return to the guesthouse to collect our luggage and drive to the airport. We need to be at the airport at 12 noon for our 14.20 flight to Dubai (Arrival to Dubai at 15.50)

**Please note the following:**

-       We will sleep and eat in traditional guesthouses and adopt their traditional ways, i.e. sleep and eat on the floor (mattresses, blankets & sheets will be provided).

-       Food is excellent, fresh, homecooked but mostly based on fish and rice. Vegetarian, only vegetable-based menu is available

-       The walks around the geosites are short, from 30 to 60 min. However, they are all sun exposed. The temperatures will be similar to those in Dubai, and should be around 23-27 C during the day and 20-25 C at night.

-       Women need to wear long tops with long sleeves, ankle long trousers/skirts and wear veil (or hat) to cover hair. Man need to wear long pants.

You can find previous report from DNHG Qeshm trip in Gazelle April 2019:

<http://www.dnhg.org/newsletter.html>

The cost of the trip is 2,400 AED all inclusive: air ticket, assistance with border formalities, twin room sharing in a local guesthouse (with ensuite bathrooms and AC where possible), all meals (B,L,D, starting with dinner, ending with breakfast), all transfers and transports, local guide throughout the stay, 2 boat trips, all entrances.

Full prepayment will be collected in advance since flights and most bookings have to be prepaid.

The group is limited: **8 – 10 pax** – on first paid basis.

If interested, please contact Sonja at lavson@gmail.com

 **after 11th October 2019**