



WINDSTAR'S MIDDLE EAST ITINERARIES VISIT CITIES

that have been welcoming Western visitors for many years. Guests can expect gracious hospitality and cheerful greetings. English is spoken everywhere and most signage is bi-lingual. Almost every place one goes, normal dress and manners will be readily accepted. When visiting mosques, and dressing more conservatively, the experience will be well worth the respectful effort.

A little advance preparation and awareness can enhance travel enjoyment without taking up luggage space. These destinations have never been more accessible to visitors, but a little extra awareness adds to authentic excursion experiences, bestowing rich, unforgettable memories.

Everyday public life will be more familiar than imagined. There are ample resources to help one feel confident about the trip. Each country has slightly different rules, customs, and regulations. Website information from US and UK governments provides excellent and updated facts for safe travel.



THESE ARE THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM GUESTS:

Which countries require visas in advance?

Egypt and Saudi Arabia require advance online applications for tourist visas. For Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, and UAE, no advanced visa arrangements are required. Our **CIBT Entry Guide** will provide the most up-to-date requirements.

What attire is appropriate to wear?

These destinations enjoy hot and sunny conditions and have specific dress codes based on centuries of tradition. The best practical approach is to wear modest, light clothing—nothing form-fitting—that covers elbows and knees without loud graphics or slogans. Depending on specific customs, men may need to avoid shorts, sleeveless shirts, skinny jeans, and any jewelry beyond a wristwatch and wedding ring. Women should consider flowing or loose-fitting clothes made from fabrics that are non-transparent.



WINDSTAR[®]
CRUISES
180° FROM ORDINARY[®]

What are mosque requirements?

The best way to visit a mosque is on a guided tour where the tour guide can assist the guests. The mosques open to non-Muslim visitors are the major attractions with specific visiting hours. If allowed to enter the prayer halls, one must remove shoes, which will be stowed in shoe shelves by the entrance. Women must wear scarves to cover their heads, hair, and necks, and clothes that cover all but hands and feet. Any jewelry or accessories symbolizing faiths beyond Islam should be tucked away. When inside a prayer hall, it is customary to speak quietly and follow the designated walkways.

Where can alcoholic beverages be consumed?

Onboard the Windstar yacht, liquor service will be available in most ports. While visiting the ports, guests may order and consume alcoholic beverages in licensed venues, generally hotels and some restaurants. Alcohol will not be available in Saudi Arabia or onboard in Saudi waters where it is illegal.

What social norms are appropriate behavior?

Guides will help guests to respect local customs, but keep these general guidelines in mind:

- Public displays of affection between sexes are discouraged and may be considered illegal in some countries. Very few people will be seen holding hands.
- Whenever seated, it's customary to avoid exposing the soles of the feet or shoes to others.
- When eating "finger food" on excursions—especially traditional meals or street food—only eat with the right hand. The right hand is considered the clean hand.
- Consider commonsense courtesies around hosts. For example, before taking pictures, ask the guide or intended photo subject(s) for permission. A souk vendor will likely allow a photograph of displays or merchandise after an item has been purchased from him.
- Men often greet by shaking hands and these introductions may last longer than is customary in the US. In some circumstances men do not shake hands with women unless the woman offers her hand first.

What is the weather like?

The weather from November to February during Windstar's Middle East season is very mild with the temperatures from the upper 60s at night to highs in the 80s during the day. Bring a light jacket as it will get chilly at night. As this is a desert climate, it is generally dry and unlikely to rain.

Can you swim in the water?

Yes, the beaches, sunbathing, and swimming in the water are a large part of any Middle East itinerary! A one piece, plenty of sunscreen, and snorkel equipment are highly recommended. Indulge yourself at Windstar's Signature Beach Party on Sir Bani Yas Cruise Beach with plenty of local flavor and fabulous views.



For more social behavior tips, browse the [US](#) and [UK](#) government websites. Pay particular attention to the "Local Laws and Special Circumstances" section on the [US](#) website, and the "Local Laws and Customs" section of the [UK](#) website.

Here are a few helpful blog posts from travelers discussing their experiences:

- <https://visitabudhabi.ae/en/plan-your-trip/essential-info/climate-and-what-to-wear>
- <https://www.saudiarabiavisa.co.uk/dress-code-foreigners.html>
- <https://againststhecompass.com/en/travel-to-saudi-arabia/>
- <https://theplanetd.com/etiquette-in-the-middle-east-need-to-know-travel-tips-for-men-and-women/>
- <https://bit.ly/AlcoholandSaudiArabia>.



WINDSTAR
CRUISES
180° FROM ORDINARY®