



## History

During the Golden Age of the Persian Empire in the 6th century BC, Oman was the site of many important ports and coastal forts monitoring trade from India and South-East Asia.

Oman was one of the first countries to accept Islam, and due to extensive trading and its role in various Islamic conquests in the Middle East, it is credited with spreading the religion to the east coast of Africa, India and South-East Asia.

## Government

The country is ruled by a Sultan who appoints Diwans, or a cabinet, to assist and advise him. An elected advisory council was created in 1991, although universal suffrage was only given in 2003.

## Social Issues

Oman is generally considered to be one of the most developed and modernized countries in the region. Recently it has faced an increase in unemployment, now at 15%,<sup>1</sup> as well as scrutiny from human rights organisations such as Amnesty International for its treatment of civilian protestors.

## Religion

75% of the 3 million population are Ibadhi Muslim, with the remaining quarter of the population Sunni and Shiite Muslims, as well as Hindus and a very small Christian minority.<sup>2</sup> Over 98% of Oman's Christian population are expatriates situated in urban areas.

There is no constitution in Oman, so freedom of religion is not officially granted. However, discrimination on the basis of religion is illegal. It is against the law to proselytize, as well as print non-Muslim materials within Oman. Religious organisations must be registered with the

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state, and are only permitted to practise in designated areas.

### **Prayer Points**

Pray for continued harmony between the various religions in Oman today, as well as for the leniency and freedom given to the Christians there.

Pray that Christian worship will not continue to be confined to designated compounds, but may be available to all people.