

# **APPE: Sultanate of Oman Manual**

Created January 2014

**Overview:**

WVU School of Pharmacy is partnered with Oman Medical College (OMC) in Muscat, Oman. Muscat is the capital city of Oman and is located between the mountains and the Gulf of Oman. It is a city with a population just over 700,000 people. Oman is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which includes regional countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Students who receive this rotation will gain experience in a variety of practice settings including: hospitals, ministry of health, industry, and community. Some of the activities of this rotation include:

- Ministry of Health:
  - Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control: You will learn about the regulatory processes for private pharmacies in Oman meeting with the different directors: pharmacy, drug control, and quality control.
  - Directorate of Rationale Use of Medication: Here you will learn about the regulatory process on the rationale use of medications.
- Hospital: Time will be spent rounding with various medical services (examples include cardiology, acute medicine, nephrology, and pediatrics), answering drug information questions, and discussing topics with preceptors. Outpatient pharmacy will also be covered.
- Community: Each student will be placed at a branch of Muscat Pharmacy, the largest private pharmacy chain in Oman.
- Industry: You may have the opportunity to visit NPI Pharmaceuticals and tour their facilities to learn about the development, manufacture and supply of medications to Oman and the GCC.
- Presentations: Presentations will be given to the faculty of Oman Medical College on the activities completed during the rotation, and how the Omani health care system compares to America's system

The last week of the rotation will be in Morgantown, WV with Dr. Lena Maynor. A final presentation will be given to faculty and students at the School of Pharmacy.

You should consider this rotation if...

- YOU ARE FLEXIBLE!
- You are interested in international travel
- You are interested in learning more about the treatment of sickle cell and its complications
- You are interested in healthcare outside the U.S.
- You enjoy meeting new people
- You would like a unique experience to advance your career in pharmacy

You should not consider this rotation if...

- You have difficulty adapting to sudden changes in daily activities
- You do not wish to be immersed in a different culture
- You have trouble adjusting to new settings

- You are not self-motivated to complete assignments
- You are opposed to potentially sharing living space with classmates

Schedule for 2014

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>1/1/2014</b>	<b>Arrival: Muscat International Airport Accommodation: OMC Guest House</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>1/2/2014</b>	<b>12PM: visit to OMC to meet with Deans and faculty 1PM: Lunch with faculty Evening: City tour of Muscat Grand Mall and Matrah Suq</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>1/3/2014</b>	<b>11AM: Trip to Qur'm beach</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>1/4/2014</b>	<b>Morning: Visit Nizwa, Misfat, and Al Hoota Cave</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>1/5/2014</b>	<b>8AM: Ministry of Health Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>1/6/2014</b>	<b>8AM: Sultan Qaboos University Hospital</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>1/7/2014</b>	<b>8AM: NPI Pharmaceuticals</b>
<b>Wednesday/Thursday</b>	<b>1/8/2014-1/9/2014</b>	<b>8AM: Ministry of Health Directorate of Rational Use of Medications  9<sup>th</sup>-Presentation comparing healthcare and pharmacy systems in USA with Oman</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>1/10/2014</b>	<b>Nakhla and al- Swadi Beach</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>1/11/2014</b>	<b>Sightseeing</b>
<b>Sunday to Thursday (first week)</b>	<b>1/12/2014-1/16/2014</b>	<b>7:30AM: Royal Hospital</b>
<b>Friday/Saturday</b>	<b>1/17/2014-1/18/2014</b>	<b>Dubai trip</b>
<b>Sunday to Thursday (second week)</b>	<b>1/19/2014-1/23/2014</b>	<b>7:30AM: Royal Hospital 23<sup>rd</sup>-Presentation comparing hospital</b>

		<b>pharmacy in USA with Oman, and description of USA community pharmacy</b>
<b>Friday/Saturday</b>	<b>1/24/2014-1/25/2014</b>	<b>Overnight trip to Wahiba Sands</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>1/26/2014-1/28/2014</b>	<b>8AM: Muscat Pharmacy community training</b>

**Estimated Cost 2014 for each student**

Flight	~1000
Wahiba Sands trip	\$140
Dubai trip	~250
Spending money	Varies per student; OMC provided students in 2014 with \$700 each for food
Travel Insurance	~45
Immunizations: Hep A (2 shot series, only need 1 prior to coming) Typhoid (Comes in oral, has to be completed one week prior to departure)	~\$100

Exchange rate in January 2014: 1 Omani Rial = 2.6 US dollars

Congratulations on your selection for the APPE international rotation in Muscat, Oman!! While your experience will undoubtedly be different than ours, we have a prepared a guide with helpful tips to make your trip smooth and enjoyable.

## **BEFORE YOU LEAVE:**

### *Make Travel Plans*

- As soon as the rotation dates are set, start looking at flights. The rates will fluctuate but don't wait until the last minute. You may want to consult with the teacher accompanying you on the trip.
- Check into what the airline allows for checked baggage and carry on items. KLM has a weight limit on carry bags of 12 kg and checked bags at 23 kg as of December 2013. These amounts will differ between airlines so it is important to know before you start packing.
- Someone will meet you in Muscat to pick you up and bring you to where you will be staying. The Muscat airport is very small, but bus. It should not be difficult to find the person responsible for picking you up.
- Make sure to travel with the name, address, and contact number for somebody associated with OMC.

### *Plan Ahead*

- Make sure that you have a valid passport. Passport applications can be obtained at the post office and can take up to 8 weeks to be processed and returned. If you need to apply for a passport, do so early!
- Keep at least 2 photo copies of your passport – one that you will take with you and one that you will leave at home. In the event that you lose your passport, having a copy with you or a copy at home that someone could fax to the embassy will make it much easier to replace your passport.
- Make an appointment with the travel nurse at student health to allow ample time to receive your vaccinations. The CDC typically recommends that travelers visiting Oman receive the hepatitis A (2 shots in 6 months, but only 1 shot is required prior to departure) and typhoid vaccines. Rabies is only required if you are going to be around animals. Try to schedule your appointments as a group, as the counseling fee is less per student that way.
- Be sure your computer hardware is fully functional and reliable. Update your Master ID before you leave. The last thing you want to have is a crashed computer in a foreign country.
- Omani SIM cards don't work in US iPhones, but should work in Android phones. At least one student in your group should get a SIM card and an Omani phone number, as you will need to contact people at OMC regularly.
- Skype is blocked in Oman. You wish to create a Viber account, which will allow you to call or text via Wi-fi or data.
- Make your luggage easily identifiable. Many bags will look the same so having a luggage tag or other identifier will help find bags more quickly.
- Pack all valuables in your carry-on luggage.

- Be sure to call your financial institutions to inform them of your travel plans, including all layovers. If you have not alerted them that you will be out of the country, your purchases will most likely be denied.
- Electricity: You will at least need to buy a G type British adapter. A converter (US power is 110 V, Omani is 220 V) may be necessary. Do your own research by looking at the individual power cords of your electronics, but we found that our computers and phone chargers could handle up to 240 V which is the voltage standard in Oman. However, hair dryers and electronic razors may need the power converter. In general, if the cord has a black box, it will probably be fine without a converter, just be sure to read the fine print.

#### *What to Bring*

- Small first aid kit (bandages, antibiotic ointment, tweezers, etc.)
- Any needed medications (Rx or OTC).
- Alarm clock
- Light clothes – it is winter in Oman which means it's in the 70s.
- Swimwear (for warm days by the pool or beach)
- International power converter and adapter that fits U.S. 3 pronged devices
- USB flash drive
- Electronic and paper resources (if possible)
- Hand sanitizer
- Watch
- Travel pillow (optional)
- Portable luggage scale (optional)
- Bring formal attire if you plan to attend a program at the Royal Opera House
- Girls: Bring clothes that cover your shoulder and upper arm down to your elbow. Light cardigans work well with shirts that have shorter sleeves. All dresses/shorts should be to at least your knees, and preferably longer.
- Professional dress is required
- WVU white coat

#### *What NOT to bring: Alcohol*

#### *Finances*

- It is a good idea to exchange some cash upon arrival in Oman. The exchange counters at the Muscat Grand Mall have the best exchange rate.
- For large cash withdrawals, ATMs have a more favorable exchange rate than exchange bureaus. However, most banks have a foreign transaction charge.
- Look into getting a credit card that has a 0% foreign transaction charge with which to make purchases.

### *Things to Know*

- There are weight limitations on checked luggage and they ARE enforced. If you plan on buying souvenirs, you may want to plan on bringing an extra suitcase (check with all airlines you'll be traveling with for associated fees).
- You may buy more souvenirs than you think, and many are made of wood and stone.
- Toilet paper is not always available at bathrooms, particularly outside the city. It's always a good idea to have some with you!
- When looking to purchase at the Souq from local vendors, always negotiate a price. The first price they will tell you is always higher than what you should actually pay. A good rule is to offer half and go from there.
- Taxis don't have meters in Oman. Always ask how much it would cost to go to your destination, then bargain from there.
- Tipping:
  - Tips are usually included in the bill ~5%
- Using a cell phone internationally is very expensive. It is strongly recommended that you get a SIM card when you arrive in Oman. This will require you to present your passport and address at a cell phone store.
- Wifi is available at the house and at the college. However, the modem at the house cuts in and out a lot and needs reset often. There is also a data cap on the modem, and if it runs out you can contact the college and have it reset.
- The water is safe to brush your teeth in.
- When you first in the guest house also known as the "Villa" you will want to turn on the switches with red lights just outside the bathrooms. These will turn on the hot water which will take some time to warm <12hrs.
- The outlets have individuals on switches.
- There is only a washer that can hold 10 lbs. To operate insert clothes and detergent into top left. Select mode and push the right button only, the washer should start. There should be a drying rack for your clothes. Enjoy.
- Remove your ATM card promptly from the ATM because it will capture it if you don't.
- The school will provide you with a driver to take you to and from your rotation sites. The driver can also be available to take you out for evening or weekend events, but be sure to arrange it ahead of time.

### *Cultural Considerations*

- Oman is a conservative country, so please act accordingly.
- Women will always shake hands with each other and men will do the same with each other. Foreign men should never offer to shake hands with Omani women. In general, it's best for a foreign woman to not offer to shake an Omani man's hand as it may make him uncomfortable. When in doubt, follow their lead.
- Omanis are very hospitable. If you are in a social situation and are offered tea/coffee and dates, accept the offer, as it is rude not to.
- Alcohol is only available in hotels, but be careful even if drinking there. Public drunkenness carries very harsh penalties, including jail time.

### *Things to Do*

- Many events will be planned for you, but you will also have free time to explore on your own.
- Nizwa Fort
- Al Qur'm beach
- Mattrah Souq
- Grand Mosque
- Royal Opera House
- Nakhal
- Al-Swadi Beach
- Wahiba Sands (night in the desert)
- Cornish
- Sultan's Palace

### *A Few Good Places to Eat*

- Turkish House—order several large dishes to share at the table
- Bin Ateeq—traditional Omani food
- Silk Route
- Shang Thai—at Muscat Grand Mall
- Try Omani Halwa (traditional sweet)

### *Do's and Don'ts*

- DO wash all fruits and vegetables
- DO become familiar with the area
- DO budget your money
- DO immerse yourself in the culture
- DO keep money and passport safe
- DO keep valuables in front pockets
- DO be vigilant at all times
- DO inform others of where you are going
- DO be cautious when using ATMs
- DO leave copies of your passport with family members
- DO have extra copies of your passport with you
- DO call your bank and credit card companies before leaving
- DO arrive at the airport early
- DO experience as much as possible
- DON'T take unnecessary risks
- DON'T carry large amounts of cash
- DON'T publicly display valuables
- DON'T worry about safety in Oman. It is one of the safest countries. Just like any other big city, be smart and you'll be fine.



## **UPON RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES**

- Talk with Dr. Maynor about final assignments
- Complete all unfinished assignments and update manual
- Give presentation to WVU School of Pharmacy

## **KEY POINTS**

*Be flexible. Plans will change throughout your stay so it is important to stay positive and remain engaged in the experience.*

*Remember, throughout your stay you are representing WVU as well as the United States as a whole. The future success of this rotation is highly dependent on the impressions you leave upon others. Enjoy your time, but remember to always act in a courteous and professional manner.*