

Blog Post from Latitude 35 Travel

Wadi Shab and Bimmah Sinkhole: Oases of Stunning Beauty in Oman

Much of Oman is brown rock, dirt, and sand. So when you come across a lush, vibrantly colored green and blue oasis, it's rather mind-blowing.



I had spent the morning and early afternoon on a journey to the [Jaylah Beehive Tombs](#), up high in the Hajar Mountains: seven hours of drab, dry, dusty, rocky terrain; very sparse vegetal growth; and not another tourist in sight (yay!). Had it not been for the blue sky, I would have wondered if I was going color blind.

Descending 1600 meters from the tombs, my view turned from monochrome to the basic eight Crayolas, to a full-fledged cacophony of every blue and green and in-between.



What is this surreally beautiful place? It's **Wadi Shab**, or Wadi Ash Shab, which translates to "gorge between cliffs." And boy, is it gorge-ous!



Part of Wadi Shab's majesty comes from thousands of years of erosion. Water has sliced through the mountains and carved steep walls and caves. It's fascinating to look at the pocked walls, sedimentary layers, and crumbling rock and to imagine prehistoric ice floes, torrential rains, and Arabian and Eurasian plate collisions that contributed to it all. At times, I felt like I was in [Land of the Lost](#) and expected a dinosaur (or sleestak!) to jump out at me!



Farther ahead, there's a hidden, partially-submerged cave where you can swim to a "secret" waterfall. Unfortunately, I was short on time so skipped that part. But if you look carefully in the photo below, there's a 6" waterfall just left of center. :-)



After Wadi Shab, my driver and I headed to the **Bimmah Sinkhole**, a cenote near the ocean. Frankly, after Wadi Shab, it was pretty anti-climactic; though if it had been a sunnier day, it would have looked more emerald-like.



I love the Arabic name, though — Hawiyat Najm — which means "the deep well of the falling star," because local legend says that a meteorite caused the sinkhole. In fact, it formed when the surface layer of stone collapsed due to the underlying limestone's dissolution. The lake is about 50m x 70m wide and 20m deep. The sinkhole itself is more than 90 meters deep.



I recommend visiting the Bimma Sinkhole *before* Wadi Shab so you can be impressed by both. Take your swimsuit if so inclined, but be aware of local customs and dress modestly out of the water. I wore Teva water sandals at Wadi Shab and they worked out great.