

Socotra

The Island of Dreams

Socotra Island

Known as the Galápagos of the Indian Ocean, Socotra is home to unique animals and plants, unearthly landscapes and awe-inspiring vistas. The island is a living laboratory of millions of years of evolution unlike any other place on Earth. Up to one third of all of its plant life is endemic, along with dozens of species of birds, reptiles and invertebrates which occur nowhere else on the planet.

Socotra has been described as “the most alien-looking place on Earth” for its hallucinatory landscapes of dragon trees, bottle trees and dramatic geography. It is also known as the “**Island of Dreams**” for its mesmerising beauty.

This itinerary has been carefully designed with a team of expert Socotran guides and naturalists to take in all of the key highlights that the island has to offer: from searching for unique plants and animals, exploring the immense white sand dunes, to watching the stars by camp fire under the silhouettes of the mysterious mushroom-shaped dragon trees. We will also venture into Socotra’s enormous caves and swim in turquoise waters. This is the **ultimate Socotra itinerary** for those looking to get the most out of this miraculous island.

Travel on Socotra is mostly by four wheel drive vehicles and on foot. We take vehicles as far as they can go, and then continue on footpaths to key sites and locations. This expedition involves significant walking but it is not difficult. Anyone with a normal level of fitness (capable of walking 5 km a day) can complete this trip.

DATES: Thursday, January 22nd to Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026

START POINT: Abu Dhabi (for weekly flights to/from Socotra)

END POINT: Abu Dhabi (for weekly flights to/from Socotra)

GROUP SIZE: Up to 10 participants

COST: £3,250 (British Pounds).

ADD ON: Trek to explore the Hajhir Mountains.

BESPOKE TOUR: If you do not wish to join a group tour, we can customise a private trip to suit your dates and interests. Please email us for details.

Email sales@redfernadventures.com for more information and to make bookings.

Getting there: Air Arabia runs direct flights fly from Abu Dhabi to Socotra every Tuesday and Friday. This two hour flight costs US \$930 per person (return). Flights to/from Socotra are not included in this price of this trip, but we can book these together as a group for ease (and to ensure we are all on the same booking).

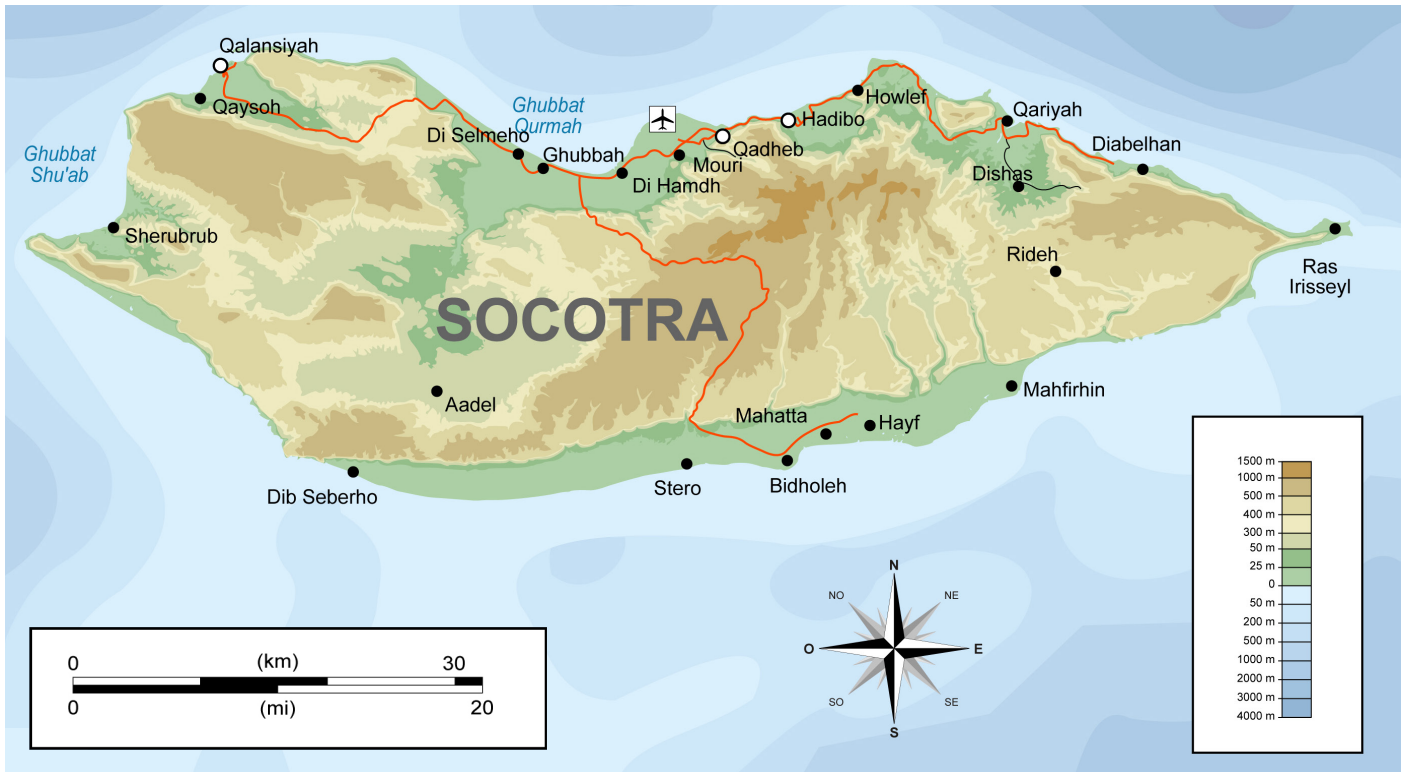


About Socotra

Socotra is 380 kilometres south of the Arabian Peninsula and 240 km east of the Horn of Africa, It is one of the most isolated landforms on Earth of continental origin (i.e. not of volcanic origin). The archipelago was once part of the supercontinent of Gondwana and detached during the Miocene Epoch, in the same set of rifting events that opened the Gulf of Aden to its northwest.

Home to around 60,000 inhabitants that are culturally distinct from both mainland Arabia and Africa, the Socotrans speak their own Semitic language called Soqotri. There are few established hotels on the island. Outside the principal city of Hadibu (population 10,000) we camp in large tents or stay in basic guesthouses.

Socotra is safe to visit yet very few tourists come to the island each year. Socotra has been described as a “dream undiscovered, off the beaten track destination”.



Flora and Fauna

Approximately 37% of Socotra's 825 plant species, 90% of its reptile species and 95% of its land snail species do not exist anywhere else on Earth.

Among the many spectacular plants on the island, the famous Socotra dragon trees (*Dracaena cinnabari*) are perhaps the best known. Also known as the "dragon's blood tree", they are so named because any injury to their bark results in a deep red liquid exuding from the scar. This sap has been used cosmetically and medicinally on Socotra and elsewhere since ancient times. It was traded for centuries as "dragon's blood".

Many tree and plant species on Socotra have adapted to the dry conditions by evolving bloated stems or swollen trunks to store water. Bottle trees, (*Dendrosicyos socotrana*) have swollen pale trunks and a tiny crown of leaves, as does the endemic desert rose (*Adenium obesum socotranum*). The island is also famed for the spreading crowns of *Euphorbia arbuscula*, several species of frankincense trees, shrubs of pink *Commicarpus simonyi*, as well as *Aloe squarrosa*, deep blue *Trichodesma microcalyx*, yellow *Hibiscus diffiran*, and the strange mignonette relative *Ochradenus socotranus*.

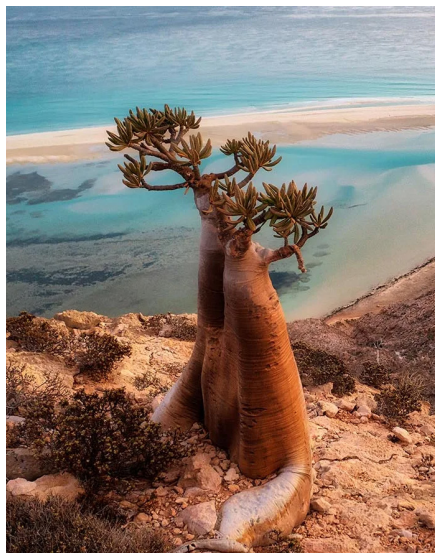
The fauna of Socotra is no less interesting. There are 291 recorded species of birds, including 13 endemic species or subspecies. Among these, the Socotra sparrow, Socotra cisticola, Socotra starling, Socotra sunbird, Socotra warbler and the rare Socotra bunting are found nowhere else. We should see many of these unique birds!

The island also hosts many migrating and seasonal breeding birds, including flamingos, cattle egrets, reef herons and gulls. The spectacular Egyptian vulture is common, with Socotra having the highest recorded density anywhere in the world.

There are 190 species of butterfly and 600 species of insects both with high proportion of endemics (approx 90%). There are at least 60 species of spiders, over 50 species of on-shore crustaceans and at least 100 species of land snails. The reptilian fauna is also very rich with 19 out of a total of 22 species regarded as endemic. There are no native amphibians in Socotra, and no native mammals aside from bats, although Arabian civet cat has been introduced and now lives across much of the island. Four species of sea turtles also visit Socotra and three of them lay their eggs in the island's sandy beaches.

Socotra's marine world has a mixture of species from different biogeographical regions (Western Indian Ocean, Red Sea, East Africa and the wider Indo-Pacific). The waters of the island are home to more than 730 species of coastal fishes, 230 species of hard corals (five are endemics) and 30 species of soft corals. In addition to 300 species of marine crustaceans (nine are endemic), 490 species of mollusks, and 230 species of algae. An endemic fresh-water crab (*Potamon socotrensis*) is common in water streams.





ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival, Ayhaft canyon and Delisha beach

We meet in Abu Dhabi airport for onward flights together to Socotra. Upon your arrival at Socotra airport, we are greeted by our team of Socotris guide who will accompany us for the trip. First you will be transferred to the hotel in Hadibo to acclimatise and have lunch. After lunch, we will head to Ayhaft Canyon National Park. There, we explore large freshwater pools where you can swim. All around you, there will be a variety of endemic plants such as the dessert rose, tamarind trees, cucumber trees, and a wide variety of birds such as Socotra sparrow, Socotra sunbird, and both Socotri and Somali starlings. After swimming, we will drive to Delisha beach which consists of pristine white sands full of crabs. You can relax while swimming both in the sea and in a freshwater lagoon. You can also climb a huge white sand dune overseeing the beach. There is also a possibility of watching a fabulous sunset from Delisha.

Day 2: Dihammri Marine Protected Area

After breakfast, we will drive to the island's northeast coast to explore the surreal snorkelling/diving site in Dihammri. The Marine Protected Area of Dihammri is home to dozens of species of colourful marine life and it is one of the richest coral reefs on the archipelago. Dihammri is blessed with more than 200 fish species and 4 of the 5 coral species that inhabit the island. This shallow reef will let even the inexperienced snorkeler enjoy its beauty as well as seeing varied marine lives including; parrotfish, moray eel, rays, turtles, small sharks, dolphins, etc. Diving/snorkelling gear can be hired from Dihammri Diving Centre. There is also a possibility of watching a fabulous sunset from Dihammri.

Day 3: Homhil Natural Protected Area

We will drive to the natural protected area of Homhil, which is home to an endless number of the Socotri endemic plants such as the dragon's blood tree, frankincense tree and desert rose, etc.

Once in Homhill, we will walk along several trails, one of which takes us to a viewpoint where there is a natural swimming pool and a view of villages below on the plain. So you can swim and enjoy a breathtaking panorama view over the Arabian Sea.





Day 4: Wadi Shifa – Ras Erisel – Arher Beach

Today, we will hike down from Homhil Plateau to the north-east coast of the island to Wadi Shifa (roughly two hours walking) where the cars can meet us. Then after a quick lunch, we will drive to Ras Erisel which is situated at the eastern end of the island where the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean meet. We then make our way to Arher beach. Here a freshwater creek meets the salty ocean water. We will have time to relax, swim or climb some of the massive sand dunes as we set up camp and prepare dinner.

Day 5: Hoq Cave – Rosh Marin Protected Area

After an early breakfast, we drive to Terbak village where Hoq Cave is located. Then we will hike up for one hour and a half until we reach the entrance of the cave, then about one hour in the side of the cave.

After exploring the cave, we walk down for one hour and a half. Hoq is the largest cave on the island and it is 3.2 km deep. The cave holds a wealth of Socotri history and hides archaeological findings such as pieces of pottery, paintings, and wooden tables with inscriptions in Aramaic language dating back to 258 AD. The cave is spectacular and contains stalagmites, stalactites, and calcite floors. Late afternoon, we proceed to the marine protected area of Rosh to explore one of the best snorkelling/diving sites on Socotra. Rosh is home to dozens of species of colourful marine life and it is one of the richest coral reefs of the archipelago. Diving snorkelling in Rosh will enable you to see several coral communities and different species of colourful marine life including moray eel, rays, turtles, sharks, and dolphins.

Day 6: Wadi Defarhu – Hayf & Zahak Sand Dunes- Digub Cave – Omak Protected Area

Today we drive to the southern coast of the Island, through the interesting Defarhu Valley. You will see traditional villages, natural water pools at the bottom of the canyon, and the unusual desert rose tree that clings to many places on the canyon walls. The vegetation here is lush green and there are many birds. After lunch, we drive to Hayf and Zahak village to witness the massive sand dunes which have been pushed up against the mountainside by the seasonal winds of Socotra. Then we will make our way to Digub cave, which overlooks a scattering of traditional villages below. The cave itself is of interest as there are many stalactites, stalagmites, and pools of water that have seeped through the rock over time. After caving, we drive to the vast sandy beach of Omak in the Indian Ocean. At Omak, we are free to swim, sunbathe, and relax in the crystal-clear water of the Indian Ocean.



Day 7: Dixam Plateau – Shebhon Viewpoint – Wadi Dirhur Canyon

After breakfast, we make our way to Dixam plateau (approx. 700 m above sea level) and Shebahon viewpoint. This area is home to many endemic plants and impressive stands of the dragon's blood tree. The trees look like giant mushrooms from outer space. We will witness lots of vultures circling overhead in the warm winds. The Shebahon viewpoint gives a marvellous vista overlooking Daerhu Canyon where we will see breathtaking scenery and unusual yet beautiful rock formations. We then make our way down to the Wadi in the canyon for lunch and an easy-going walk to swim in the freshwater pools. The rest of the day is spent exploring the canyon and observing the wildlife and unique plants.

Day 8: Rockeb Fermihen (Forest of Dragon's Blood Trees) – Wadi Dirhur

After breakfast, we will make our way by 4×4 vehicles to the largest forest of dragon's blood trees in the Rockeb Fermihen area to enjoy the remarkable landscapes and unique vegetation. After lunch, we head to the wonderful wadi of Dirhur to explore the canyon there as well as enjoying and relaxing in the wadi. You will be able to swim in the beautiful natural swimming pool as well as taking nice photos of the amazing landscapes and scenery of the canyon.

Day 9: Qalansyia – Detwah Lagoon Protected Area

Today we explore the western part of the island. Our first stop will be Qalansiya; a small traditional fishing town. From there we will continue to explore Detwah lagoon which is a marine protected area renowned for its magical landscape. This area has some of the best views on the island. Once in Detwah, you will be charmed by white sands surrounded by turquoise-coloured warm waters of the bay, an endless horizon, and an array of sea birds. You can swim both in the shallow sea and in the lagoon but be careful with stingrays in the shallows.



Day 10: Shuaab Golden Beach – Hadibo

After an early breakfast, we will hop on a boat and head to Shuaab. We are very likely to see spinner dolphins and many seabirds such as cormorants, gulls, and grey herons which nest on the cliff sides. Once in Shuaab, we can swim and then explore the beautiful mangrove forests are rich in birdlife. We end our day by making the long drive back to Hadibo.

Day 11: Hadibo – Hajhir Mountains

After an early breakfast, we will make our way to the highest peak of Socotra (Hajhir mountains, also spelt Haghier) and the trip will take around one hour by car. Hajhir is a chain of mountains that are located in the central part of the island and are considered as the highest mountains on the island. In the mountains, you will enjoy wonderful landscapes and view, and you will see different types of the unique plants and birds of Socotra. The weather there is pleasant and cool, and from Hajhir you will be able to have a panorama view of the north and east parts of the island. **Note – the optional add on trip offers a additional week exploring these mountains, trekking to some of the most remote parts of Socotra (see below).**



Day 12: Diborak Water full – Momi Plateau

Today we explore the east part of the island. Our first stop will be at Diborak waterfall, where you will be able to swim and enjoy the waterfall which comes from the mountains of Momi. After a quick lunch, we will make our way to Momi plateau. We will see traditional villages, natural water pools at the bottom of the canyon, and the unusual desert rose tree and frankincense trees that cling many places on the canyon walls and mountains.

Day 13: Wadi Daghnghen – Sirhen Lagoon – Hadibo

After breakfast, we drive to Wadi Daghnghen (north-east of Hadibo) to explore the breathtaking views and landscapes of the wadi as well as to swim in the natural pools of Daghnghen.

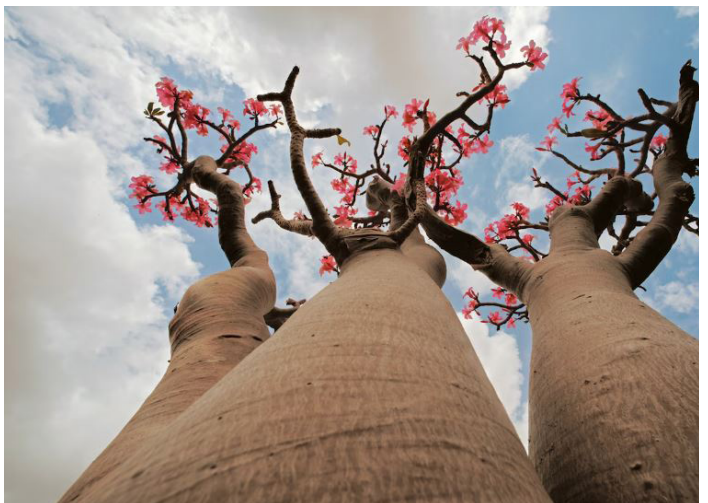
After lunch, we will continue our way to Sirhen lagoon to observe unique plants and endemic birds of Socotra such as flamingo, grey heron, seagull, etc. We then return to Hadibo to make a tour of the city to visit its fascinating old shops to buy natural products of the island as souvenirs. We overnight in a hotel in Hadibo and have dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 14: Wadi Ayhaft & Saheb beach

For our final day, we explore the valley of Ayhaft, which lies between two beautiful mountains. It is home to many endemic birds and unique plants, including *Euphorbia*. In the afternoon we travel to Saheb beach for a final glorious Socotra sunset before returning to Hadibo for our last night.

Day 15: Fly Home

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport to catch our departing flights to Abu Dhabi.





Optional Add On Trip

If you wish to stay longer on Socotra, we have organised an optional add on trip to explore the most spectacular part of the island in-depth. The Hajhir Mountains (also spelt Haghier) tower up to 1,503 m and are responsible for creating a unique weather pattern that has given birth to many of Socotra's unique endemic plant species, including the dragon's blood trees. **Please email for dates and details.**

During this week long trip, we trek with a team of local Bedouin guides and pack camels to traverse these mountains to reach Skand— the most magical of the valleys on Socotra.

This add on trip involves a 5 day trek (with one day at the start and one day at the end driving to/from the start and end points).

For the first two days of the trek, we head deep into the mountains towards Skand to the most vegetated parts of Socotra, and many of the most spectacular parts of the island.

On the third day of the trek, we leave Skand, and head back down into the valley behind Firhmin. The path continues down the wadi along flat ground to a camping spot for the evening near an abandoned school built for the local Bedouin children.



On the fourth day of the trek, we reach the Firmhin Forest, which is the last complete, large-scale woodland comprised of dragon's blood trees left on the island. Nowhere else in the world can one find dragon's blood trees in such density. A local goat herder will show us how the precious red resin of the tree is collected.

We then continue hiking down into the Derhur Canyon, where you will see unusual rock formations and can swim in freshwater pools. We have a picnic lunch, then hike for one hour to reach the Diksam Plateau.

The plateau is home to nomadic Bedouin herdsman who move from one site to another with their goat herds. You will be welcomed by them with a cup of tea, where you can observe the many houses built into ledges where the plateau meets the gorge. It's a steep finish, but rewarding, as you can watch the sunset amongst the dragon's blood trees and canyon below.

For the fifth (and final) day of the trek, we hike from the Duhur Canyon to Hadarhan and continue to the Agliso Plateau— 800 m above sea level overlooking the Noged plain in the south. The south is flat, with huge pure, white sand dunes with flocks of camels.

In the late afternoon, as the sun begins to set, you'll visit the "sea of sand" at Hayf and Zahek. There you can wander this incredible landscape, climbing between the dunes all the way to the sea. Finding pieces of ancient pottery is not uncommon here, as much of this area was under the sea in recent times. We then drive up to the Diksam Plateau for the evening.

At the end of our trek in Diksam, we visit the dragon's blood tree nursery where young trees have been growing since 2006. Since goats were introduced to the island, many of the young trees are eaten by the goats while their leaves are still soft, so it's essential to grow new trees in protected environments.

We then drive to the northwest of the island to Detwah Lagoon, a marine protected area renowned for its magical landscape and incredible coastline for swimming.

You'll be charmed by a white sandy peninsula jutting out into the sea surrounded by turquoise waters, where you can swim. There is also an array of sea birds and marine wildlife to be seen in the lagoon.

We then return to Hadibo and spend our final night at a hotel before our departing flight to Abu Dhabi.

Email sales@redfernadventures.com for more information and to make bookings.

INCLUDED:

- All entrance tickets and permits to visit national parks, including all local guide fees.
- All accommodation and food.
- All ground transportation.
- Professional tour leader.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Flights to / from Socotra
- Tips (optional).
- Dive / snorkel equipment

