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Sky High *in the* Middle East

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GAUCHOS AND GLACIERS

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IN CHILEAN PATAGONIA

THE COOL GUIDE TO
JORDAN

Scaling New Heights In Oman **The Grand Canyon Of Arabia**



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Contents

OCTOBER 2017



From Diana's Point, at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, the Saiq Plateau looks breathtaking at sunrise.

Sahar paneled outwork dress, **Vidhi Wadhvani**, ₹14,500; Colour Me Camel tie-up pants, **Lulu & Sky**, ₹4,249; PREE sunglasses, **Jimmy Choo**, ₹26,100; wrist watch, **Armani Exchange**, ₹8,495; tie-dye over-nighter duffel, **October Jaipur**, ₹5,800.

Features

84

Playing Between the Shadows

There is a certain intimacy with the skies when you are 2,000 metres above the sea level—you're an accomplice as well as a spectator. **Anwesho Sanyal** stands at the edge of the Saiq Plateau and watches the time-lapse.

96

Land of Pain and Promise

Kiese Layman and photographer **Andrew Moore** discover the wounds, traditions, and haunting beauty of Deep South.

104

Fields of Vision

Thanks to its mix of bucolic setting, historic architecture, and cutting-edge art, the Swedish estate known as **Wanås** has become a destination for cultural insiders. *By Gisela Williams, Photographs By Chris Tanssen.*

112

Of Gauchos and Glaciers

Maggie Shipstead ventures into Torres del Paine National Park in Chile for the ride of her life.

122

Song of the Forest

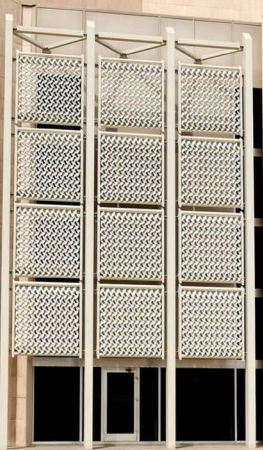
The province of British Columbia is home to First Nations communities whose history is deeply intertwined with the mountains, woods, and waters. *By Craig Taylor, Photographs By Peter Bohler.*

ON THE COVER

In a villa overlooking the Table Mountain in Oman's Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort. Produced by **Anwesho Sanyal**. Photographed by **Ashish Chawla**. Fashion Editor **Rishi Raj**. Model: **India Woods** wearing a cruise multi-slit polka maxi, **GUAPA Resort Wear**, ₹12,500; blue dori belt, **Anita Dongre**, ₹1,800; art deco light-blue earrings, **Purab Paschim by Ankit Khullar**, ₹7,000; bracelet, **Kate Spade New York**, ₹5,640.

BEYOND

Oman p. 52 Philippines p. 65 Goa p. 70





At the edge of the Green Mountain overlooking the canyon.

Handkerchief top gown with flower detail, **Gauri & Nainika**, ₹1,30,000; wooden bangle with black onyx, **Amethyst** by **Rahul Popli**, ₹3,450; metallic block heels, **Chalk Studio X Siddhartha Tytler**, ₹7,900.

A woman wearing a purple and white striped shawl is standing on a rocky mountain peak. The background shows a sunset or sunrise over a valley, with the sky transitioning from blue to yellow and orange. The woman is looking towards the camera.

Playing Between THE Shadows

THERE IS A CERTAIN INTIMACY WITH THE SKIES WHEN YOU ARE 2,000 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL—YOU'RE AN ACCOMPLICE AS WELL AS A SPECTATOR. AS THE MORNING LIGHT WAKES UP THE PERENNIAL CANYON AND THE RUGGED VALLEYS, ONLY TO LULL THEM TO SLEEP IN THE EVENING, ANWESHA SANYAL STANDS AT THE EDGE OF THE SAIQ PLATEAU AND WATCHES THE TIME-LAPSE.

PRODUCED BY ANWESHA SANYAL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ASHISH CHAWLA FASHION EDITOR RISHI RAJ
MODEL INDIA WOODS LOCATION ANANTARA AL JABAL AL AKHDAR RESORT, OMAN



The water feature resembles the irrigation channels of the old Wadi villages. Behind, is the iconic minaret of the hotel.

Berber striped sleeveless top, **Kate Spade New York**, ₹15,990; skirt, **Fendi**, price on request; sunglasses, **Ray-Ban** (at Sunglass Hut), ₹8,090; Martina wedges, **Chalk Studio**, ₹2,299; small 'Dody' bag, **Kate Spade New York**, ₹14,000; wrist watch, **Michael Kors**, ₹20,495.

If large sand dunes or lone palm trees ever cast shadows in the Middle East, they go unnoticed. As humans, we do not

fancy spending time in silhouettes, especially when we travel. Instead, our eyes follow what is easily visible, whether on the map, in the guide book, or popular opinion. I'd already been to the Middle East a couple of times when Oman happened. This time, with an eye on overcoming the vastness of the arid landscape I wanted to focus on the tinier details, and in not being overwhelmed by that which is apparent, maybe a local secret would reveal itself to a foreigner.

I had only strapped myself in a luxury SUV and bent the corner off the Muscat airport to the highway, when the brown, jagged mountains of Oman hit me: It was as if the summer sun had bleached the surroundings of all its colour and left every rock exposed, the panorama looking like the insides of a sand globe, of which I was now a part. Local secrets, here?

I arrived at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort two square hours later, humming lines from Hotel California, "*You can check-out anytime you like, but you can never leave.*" Though, one wouldn't need to halt at the front porch for that feeling to set in: the video on their website quite does the job when you book your stay—sitting at a height of 2,000 metres at the edge of the Saiq Plateau, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar looks out to the gargantuan canyon of the Green Mountain—this is where you'd be if you wanted to buy a spot at the end of the world.

My previous visit to an Anantara hotel was also my first ever; I was at Kalutara, Sri Lanka six months back, sitting on a row boat with the Fishing Guru for a good catch at five in the morning. I hadn't caught any fish that day but been acquainted with Anantara's flair for moulding itself completely into the fabric of the region it is in. At first glance, the hotel is exactly what you want it to be: somewhere to plot your disappearing act at the end of a hectic week; some place to enter like a sand castle may enter the quicksand and not offer any explanation before it melted away.

Inside, the hotel mirrors an old Wadi village, virtually inverting every lack of luxury in its surrounded area with plush villas, fine diners, and spots furnished to allow the best vantage points to the canyon. The property covers several acres on the ground, without rising much vertically: one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas are separated by lanes which mimic the 'alleys' carved between houses in the Omani villages, or lean water features, an extension of the deep dug channels that the Wadi tribe used for water irrigation. "Beautiful to look at but dangerous for heels," Jessi, the assistant marketing manager at the resort had said, "We had to put grills in so people wouldn't fall into them."

Lothi Sidirahal, founder of Atelier Pod, and architect who designed the hotel, has deployed dark, vertical bars, sometimes Arabian motifs on windows—as camouflaged time keepers. At different points in the day,

these patterns draw shadows on the ground or the building, almost anticipating your movement around the property—at six on the stairs of your villa when you descend to catch the first rays of the sun, at nine on the first-floor corridor that leads you to the Al Maison restaurant for breakfast, at half past three when the shadows escape the property momentarily to cast a ritualistic outline over the canyon, and at five when the orange sun filters through the clouds to signal the end of the day at Diana's Point—time is not only slow, it orchestrates itself to suit you.

In mirroring the Omani lifestyle, what seeps through Anantara is the silence that permeates the three abandoned villages just five kilometres from the hotel. For over 40 years, these villages have been deserted by the Wadi people due to their inaccessible location. While they moved on to find greener pastures elsewhere, somewhere a tycoon in the Middle East dreamt of a hotel that would draw luxury travellers for this very reason. Here, there's the luxury of distraction in the quietness, with only the sound of the wind, perhaps a guest walking in the distance, or the water rumbling off the channels keeping you company.

At once you know, why this is the country's newfound secret—a tiny dot juxtaposed against the large canyon you found in the guide book, only revealing itself when you seek it out. Just like the shadows under the vertical beams or life beyond the dry rocks in the desert, this spot is saved from everything the sun seemed to have parched.



The first-floor corridor leading to Al Maison restaurant reflects the Arabian motifs from the wall.

Kitsch steampunk gear-gette shirt, **Nida Mahmood**, ₹10,030; front-pleat detail trousers, **Lola by Suman B.**, ₹9,000; belt, **Armani Exchange**, ₹3,999; silver ring with ruby and single-cut diamonds, **Amethyst by Rahul Poptu**, ₹21,900; Krysie wedges, **Dune**, ₹8,999; EYELIGHT eyewear, **Givenchy**, ₹19,400; The Illusionist Bolt Blue trunk, **The V Renaissance**, ₹1,85,000.





The Anantara Spa has an indoor pool perfect for a late-night dip.

Surf Bride swimsuit, **Roxy**, ₹2,795; tile texture stole, **Kavita Bhartia**, ₹24,600.



The sun falls in patches on an outdoor sofa in the garden pool villa.

No Trouble with Ruffle dress, Lulu & Sky, ₹9,300; sandals, Rosso Brunello, ₹5,299.



The vertical panels make shadows on the walls at six in the morning.

Dégradé striped cady dress, **Fendi**, ₹1,67,976; ANITA sunglasses, **MaxMara**, ₹16,200; animal print pattern leather sandals, **Woods**, ₹3,395; bag, **Christian Louboutin X Saabyasachi**, ₹1,80,000; wrist watch, **Kate Spade New York**, ₹13,995.



The signature bar Al Burj on the first floor of the minaret offers premium beverages from around the world.

Cotton-silk shirt with applique, **Sahil Kochhar**, ₹15,680; leather-cord patola skirt, **My Village by Rimzim Dada**, ₹28,000; stud earrings, **Purab Paschim by Ankit Khullar**, ₹4,500; brass cuff with enamel finish, **Shivan & Narresh X Swarovski for CONFLUENCE**, ₹10,500; pumps, **Woods**, ₹4,995.

Sitting at a height of 2,000 metres at the edge of the Saiq Plateau and looking out to a gargantuan canyon of the Green Mountain, this is what you'd do if you wanted to buy a spot at the end of the world.





THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Oman Air runs direct flights (less than four hours) from major Indian cities to Muscat. From the airport, it takes two hours to reach Anantara Al Jabal Akhdar Resort. The visa (₹23,939) takes about seven days, and the hotel can arrange it for you, too.

STAY

The three-bedroom **Royal Mountain Villa** is perfect for large families or a group of nine. It comes with a large infinity pool that overlooks the canyon. From ₹4,13,349 per night. anantara.com

VISIT

Get an immersive walking tour of the nearby area with the **Mountain Guru** who brings his own childhood memories to life as he takes you through the three abandoned Wadi villages.

INDULGE

The rugged plateau adds a fantastic backdrop to a luxury mountain picnic prepared for you by the hotel. Take their signature hikes and encounter the free-roaming wildlife, hike down fossil staircases, admire cave villages, and swim under a beautiful waterfall.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Within the hotel's iconic **Musandam Tower** lies two signature offerings. The **Al Qalaa** restaurant brings secret recipes from Omani kitchens to the fine diner on the ground floor. Above, **Al Burj** is the Moroccan Lounge bringing a premium collection of beverages.

WHERE TO BUY

Chalk Studio 110-B, Pal Mohan Plaza, 11/56, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi; **Christian Louboutin** Sir HC Dinshaw Building, 16 Horniman Circle, New Delhi; **Fendi** DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; **Jimmy Choo** Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; **Kate Spade** New York DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; **Kavita Bhatia** Ogaan, DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; **Lulu & Sky** Ishaansky, com; **Michael Kors** Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; **Mint Blush** 34, Fashion Street, Shapur Jat, New Delhi; **October Jaipur** octoberjaipur.com; **Purab Paschim** D-20, Shiniwas Puri, Block D, Defence Colony, New Delhi; **Rimzim Dadu** A-72, Sector-2, Delhi; **Rosso Brunello** Orion Mall, Subramanya Nagar, Bengaluru; **Roxy** Ambience Mall, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; **Sahil Kochhar** COLLAGE, 21/1, Wood St. Ashok Nagar, Bengaluru; **Sunglass Hut** Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; **Swarovski Confluence** pernispopushop.com; **Tarun Tahliani** 11, Linking Rd, Santacruz West, Mumbai; **Vidhi Wadhvani** vidhiwadhvani.com; **Woodland** Inorbit Mall, G-32, Link Road, Malad West, Mumbai; **Zariin Jewelry** zariin.com

Dennis Point is the viewing platform that gives looks the canyon. **Sehmi** at Al Jabal Akhdar, Musandam, Bine By, Doha, Qatar online.

Sahil paneled cutwork dress, **Vidhi Wadhvani**, ₹14,500; Cocoon M2, Gianni tie-up heels, **Lulu & Sky**, ₹4,249; DREE sunglasses, **Jimmy Choo**, ₹20,100; wrist watch, **Armani Exchange**, ₹6,495; tie-dye over-nighter shirt, **October Jaipur**, ₹5,800