



15 reasons why I love Oman and things that make Oman a great nation
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1. ***Japan Loves Oman:*** The official visit of the Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Shinzo Abe to the Sultanate this year demonstrated to Omani people the high esteem in which Japan holds Oman. I am delighted to convey that the Prime Minister, who is Honorary Chairman of the Japan-Oman Society, was impressed by Oman's beauty, history, tradition and the warmth of its people. While hosting PM Abe, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said showed him historic national treasures inside the palace. Afterwards, the Prime Minister commented how struck he was by the stunning aesthetics, gracefulness, dignity and sense of history that he encountered. He considers the Sultanate of Oman to be an outstanding part of the Arab world. PM Abe had long dreamed of visiting Oman, and he actually made two visits in one trip, a highly unusual move, opting to refuel here on his return from the African leg of his official tour. On the journey from the airport to my Qurum residence, where I hosted him for dinner, the Prime Minister and his wife said they "felt at home" being back in Oman.
2. ***Monarchy, Pride of the Nation:*** His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said steers Oman with wisdom and dignity. Japan also has a monarchy, and Japan's love of Oman extends to Japan's highest echelon. The Royal Families of Japan and Oman enjoy a warm, longstanding friendship. Before coming to Oman to officially represent Japan as Ambassador, I met the Emperor, Empress and Crown Prince of Japan and took away the strong impression that they have a special affection for the Sultanate of Oman. In 1935, after abdicating the throne, Sultan Taimur married a Japanese woman named Kiyoko Oyama and their daughter, Princess Buthaina, lives in Muscat, bringing Japanese and Omani people closer still.
3. ***World-class Hospitality:*** My wife, Midori, and I have always been made to feel warmly welcome in this beautiful country by its hospitable, humble, calm and kind people, wherever we go. I'm very happy to say that all our Japanese friends who have visited felt the same, and love Oman too.

4. ***Peace-based Worldview:*** Much like Japan, Oman is a discreet country with peace in its heart. The Sultanate plays a quiet but important role in maintaining peace in the Middle East, providing a neutral setting in a region where there exist unresolved issues such as the Iranian nuclear issue and conflicts in Iraq and Syria.
5. ***Natural Heritage:*** Like Japan, the Sultanate is blessed with exquisite diverse and unspoiled nature. Oman's statuesque mountains, which change colour with the time of day, to its sweeping deserts, refreshing wadis, and pristine coastlines as far as the eye can see, with a Government that has a dedicated Ministry to protect such assets (MECA), draw people from around the world.
6. ***Cultural Heritage:*** Like Japan, Oman remains loyal to its rich heritage and balances the traditional and modern very skillfully. I find its places of cultural and historical heritage fascinating and magnetic and, at the same time, enjoy its modern comforts, infrastructure and facilities. Japanese visitors have an affinity with Oman's efforts to develop while maintaining her natural beauty and historical identity, since this is what Japan has also attempted.
7. ***Home of Harmony:*** Oman is a diverse nation and model of social and religious tolerance and concord.
8. ***I love Oman because Oman loves Japan:*** Happily, I find Omani people to be very pro-Japan, thanks to our popular products such as cars and electronics as well as having many shared values stemming from our mutual collectivist cultures. Japan will never forget the friendship that Oman displayed following one of our worst ever natural disasters, the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Japan's Red Cross announced that Oman ranked fourth in the list of top donor countries and regions of relief funds after the USA, Taiwan and Thailand. This fact was widely reported in Japan, and Japanese people, myself and my friends included, were profoundly moved by such kindness and friendship.
9. ***Stable and Reliable Partner:*** The safe and stable environment of Oman is extremely attractive to Japanese visitors and expatriates, since Japan has one of the world's lowest crime rates. The security of Oman, a country of geopolitical importance, whose territorial waters include the international shipping route in the Strait of Hormuz through which around 85% of Japan's oil and gas imports pass, ensures Japan a stable supply of energy for its own security and development.
10. ***Solid Trading Partners:*** Oman has a strong investment and business-friendly climate. Japan-Oman bilateral trade is currently around \$8.8 billion, and this figure is likely to grow following the signing of a Bilateral Tax Agreement between the two countries this year as well as a Bilateral Investment Agreement in the near future.
11. ***Musical Harmony:*** Both my wife and I are music aficionados and play instruments, so we are extremely lucky that my Oman tour of duty coincided with the opening of the Royal Opera House, where we have enjoyed world-class performances that will remain with us for life.

12. ***Football-loving Nation:*** Like the majority of Omani, and indeed Japanese people, I adore football. Among all of the foreign Ambassadors accredited to the Sultanate, I'm proud to be the most frequent spectator & top supporter of the Oman National Team's international matches in Muscat! I try not to miss a match, and have enjoyed some wonderful football here.
13. ***A Land of Gentlemen:*** During the 2012 Asian Qualifiers World Cup in Muscat, which coincided with the 40th anniversary of official Japan-Oman diplomatic relations, the Japan Football Association (FA) President and VIPs, Japanese fans and myself were all deeply moved by the unforgettable gentlemanly and gracious conduct displayed by the Omani fans when Japan won a close match. In stark contrast to experiences in many other countries, when leaving the stadium in their buses the Japanese team and supporters received nothing but congratulatory cheers, waves, smiles and goodwill from Omani supporters. Japan's FA President, who has attended many matches across the world, commented that he had never seen anything like it before. The experience left everyone with the favorable impression of Oman as being a very special place indeed.
14. ***Great Maritime Nations:*** Both Oman and Japan have a long and distinguished maritime history. Many Japanese people know Oman as the land of Sindbad the Sailor and traditional wooden Arabian dhow ships. A Japanese shipping company, Mitsui OSK Line Ltd., donated a high-tech simulation facility worth around \$2 million to the International Maritime College Oman in Sohar for its 2011 inauguration. Japan and Oman cooperate closely on today's waters in such areas as counter-piracy.
15. ***Cute Omani Children:*** My wife and I love children, and find Omani children to be the cutest we have encountered. Omani little ones are delightfully endearing, especially when proudly and immaculately adorned in their Omani national costumes.