

THE SHANGRI-LA BARR AL JISSAH RESORT - SULTANATE OF OMAN APRIL 2012

I want to start my report by saying I liked what I saw of Oman and regret not spending more time out of the hotel. It is unlike Dubai, its glitzy neighbour, maybe because it controls all new building to a maximum of six stories. It has more to it than Dubai and I would consider another visit.



Oman has positioned itself as the authentic face of Arabia. With a diversity of landscapes, from the fjords in the north, to lush green valleys in the south and desert safaris in the Wahiba sands. Add in 6000 years of history with forts, souks, mosques and palaces to view plus wildlife lovers will love the diving, the turtles, the dolphins and camel markets! I personally haven't seen any of these, but a couple of years ago a colleague of mine, Sarah Firth in the Wickford office, spent a week travelling Oman and can advise or fill in any gaps.

With regards to the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, I feel qualified to talk about the hotel as having in the last couple of years experienced resort hotels of a similar type in Tenerife, Sharm el Sheik and Mauritius. All resort hotels provide guests with space and a range of facilities that smaller properties cannot offer. So what does the Shangri-La have and how does it compare to my other experiences.



The Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah is made up of three separate properties on a private beach, but all have a different feel and more importantly most facilities are available to guests staying at any of the three hotels and it is this point that I believe defines a good resort hotel. The quality must be good, but what many of our client's are looking for is choice of leisure activities and restaurants so the Shangri-La as a holiday venue should be recommended.

The Al Waha is the lead in property and described as a 5 star resort, but I cannot agree with this observation. The rooms were fine, the pool area okay and the main restaurant average, however if it wasn't for the facilities at its two sister hotels provided next door I could see no reason why it deserved such a high rating. That is unless you are a family where the facilities are perfect for young children needing a safe environment to play in. The Al Waha offers splash parks, outdoor play areas, a children's club on site, a large pool area, but most importantly when you book we can guarantee special interconnecting family rooms complete with games consol.



The Al Bandar was my chosen hotel linked to the Al Waha by a beachside path or the lazy river! This hotel was less hectic, and less family orientated. It was the centre of the resort and the location for the Shangri-La's leisure facilities including the gym, spa, tennis club, the water sports centre and with it being central you also had easier access to all the resort's restaurants.



At first I was uncertain about the sprawling resort, but referring back to my opening statement about resort hotels it did everything it said it would do. I used a very comfortable gym, the tennis coach was keen to help and play, the non motorised water sports were free and the spa looked peaceful. What I thought set this hotel apart was the choice of restaurants where I enjoyed exceptional food. The fish restaurant provided a “choose your own fish” choice, the Italian was so flavoursome and as a non buffet user I thought the international buffet restaurant was good especially at breakfast. You also had a more casual tapas restaurant when you couldn’t face any more food.

The Al Husn is the third hotel and has a unique ambiance as it has an adult only policy around the pool and leisure facilities. Al Waha and Al Bandar guests can use the restaurants, but not the rest of the hotel. Again, my first impressions were that it looked very bland stuck on the hill above the resort, but it wasn’t until I started experiencing the facilities that you find it has a real quality and deserves its 6 star rating. I liked the large comfortable rooms, the gentleness of the resort, the fact it had a grill restaurant on its own private beach, but again the restaurants (Moroccan and International) shone for providing a stunning setting and top quality food.



Finally, one should mention the service was as expected in a resort of this quality, polite and efficient staff made my families stay most enjoyable. Almost as enjoyable as being called to the beach and watching infant turtles being released back into the sea on our last day. The hotels beach is a nesting ground for turtles and at certain times of the year you can see the mothers laying and the infant release programme designed to help as many turtles reach adult hood.

Overall the Shangri-La resort was a most enjoyable holiday venue, but how does it compare against its competitors for value. I have looked at guide prices for a week's holiday for two people in October and have included half board in all venues. My thoughts on value are also included.

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| The Al Waha - | £3516.00 | Only book this for families. Spend the extra to stay at the Al Bandar or upgrade to Mauritius. The Victoria is a nicer venue |
| The Al Bandar - | £3736.00 | In my Opinion the one to book at the Shangri La resort |
| The Abama Resort - | £2806.00 | Better than both the above hotels and substantially less. The weather in Oman at certain times of the year is much better, but Tenerife is worth considering. |
| The Victoria - | £3661.00 | This Mauritian hotel has a much more exotic feel and is a firm favourite of ours especially when compared with the Al Waha |
| The Four Seasons -
Sharm-el-Sheik | £3032.00* | Again, not as hot at certain times of the year, but worth checking as the hotel facilities and quality provided is better than the Al Bandar
* £420 allocation for evening meal |



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