Saudi Arabia: From Ancient Trade Routes to Contemporary Society November 4-16, 2025







Through conversations and visits, this program sets out to explore the significant changes taking place in Saudi Arabia. Begin in Jeddah, a commercial port-city whose old city is renowned for its traditional multi-storied dwellings made of coral. Enjoy the striking mountain scenery around Abha where tiny villages are nestled amidst green terraced fields. Follow an ancient trade route to Madain Saleh, a desert plateau strewn with monumental rock-hewn tombs from the ancient Nabataean kingdom. Nearby sits labyrinthian Al 'Ula, once a wealthy trading hub along the "Incense Route" and characterized by its narrow, winding streets. Fly to Riyadh, the kingdom's imposing capital that only sixty years ago was a remote walled village. Travel by train to Al Hofuf, home of the Al-Ahsa Oasis, the world's largest oasis and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Also visit the Qaisariah Souq, one of the most traditional markets in the country. In Dhahran to the east, become familiar with the immense Saudi oil industry, understanding its central role in dramatically shaping modern Saudi Arabia. Return home from Dhahran.

Educational Leaders



Samir Komosani, Expert Guide

With over 23 years of experience, Samir Komosani has revolutionized the tourism industry in Saudia Arabia. Widely recognized as the country's top tour guide, he is responsible for legitimatizing the tourism industry pushing for regulation and certifications. Operating on the belief "We want tourists more than you expect. It's like when you have a big house and it's beautiful and well decorated and you have good furniture but you don't have guests, and you would love to receive them."



Janet Moore, Trip Leader

Janet Moore is the owner of Distant Horizons, a high-end recognized tour company focusing on less-well traveled corners of our world as well as domestic themes that impact the nation that is America. Janet has traveled extensively and is particularly interested in the challenge of opening up new destinations to American travelers with sensitivity and respect to the host country. Janet has been amongst the first to initiate cultural programs to many destinations including Saudi Arabia, which she first visited over 24 years ago. In the last few years, she has accompanied several groups to the Kingdom, most recently with a delegation from the Council on Foreign Relations.

ITINERARY

Tuesday, November 4

Depart the USA bound for Jeddah.

Wednesday, November 5 Jeddah

D

Upon arrival in Jeddah transfer to the newly renovated *Jeddah Sheraton Hotel*.

Jeddah was once a port living mostly off the pilgrim trade of Mecca and served as Mecca's outlet to the sea. The spread of Islam soon transformed Jeddah into a thriving metropolis in its own right. Over the years, it became one of the Arab world's most important commercial centers although it still remains the principal port of entry for more than two million pilgrims who make their way to the holy city of Mecca each year.

Light dinner this evening at the hotel.

Thursday, November 6 Jeddah

B,L,D

This morning meet with **Ahmed Al Omran** an independent Saudi journalist. He has worked for the National Public Radio in Washington DC, before returning to his home country to become the Saudi correspondent for The Wall Street Journal and more recently the Financial Times.

Continue on to the **Al Tayebat Museum** which is part of the International Tayebat City of Science and Knowledge a three-hundred year old building that was originally the palace of Sheikh Abdul Rauf Khalil.

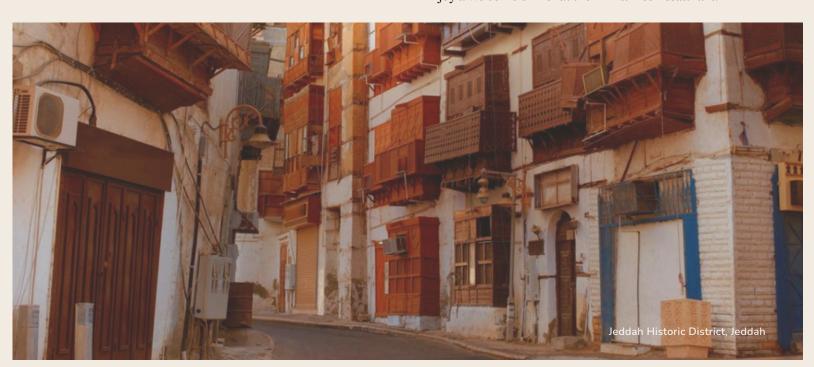
Following the traditions of simple Hijazi architecture it is built from red sea coral block and limestone. Split into twelve buildings and three-hundred rooms, the museum displays Khalil's personal collection which ranges from Islamic manuscripts and old coins to furniture and pottery.

Meet with Mohammad Alrace who runs an organization – the Furqan Educational group - that teaches youth about the Koran and uses the text of the Koran as a teaching tool for the Arabic language. They work closely with many national interfaith organizations for the betterment of society and have offices all over the world.

For lunch head into Jeddah's historical district, a UNESCO World Heritage site known as **Al Balad** and situated on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. From the 7th century it was established as a major port for Indian Ocean trade routes, channeling goods and Muslim pilgrims to Mecca. These twin roles saw the city develop into a thriving multicultural center, characterized by a distinctive architectural tradition, including tower houses built in the late 19th century by the city's mercantile elites, and combining Red Sea coastal coral building traditions with influences and crafts from along the trade routes.

We hope to meet Sami Nawar, director emeritus of Al Balad, to explore old Jeddah and visit Bait Nassif, one of Al Balad's most important buildings. This is the place where King Abdulaziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, stayed for three years when he was in Jeddah.

Enjoy a welcome dinner at the **Al-Nakheel restaurant**.



Friday, November 7 Abha

B,L,D

Enjoy a morning snorkel excursion to the **Red Sea** which contains one of the greatest coral reefs in the world with over 200 species of coral and numerous species of fish found nowhere else in the world. The coral reefs of Saudi Arabia are among the most beautiful and extensive anywhere.

For lunch drive to the **US Consulate** where there will be an opportunity to meet and have lunch with a group of several young Saudi entrepreneurs for a discussion of the business opportunities and climate in Saudi Arabia today.

Depart Jeddah on a late afternoon flight to **Abha**, the capital of Asir province which enjoys a beautiful setting in the Hejaz mountains. Stay at the **Abha Palace Hotel**.

Saturday, November 8 *Abha*

B,L,D

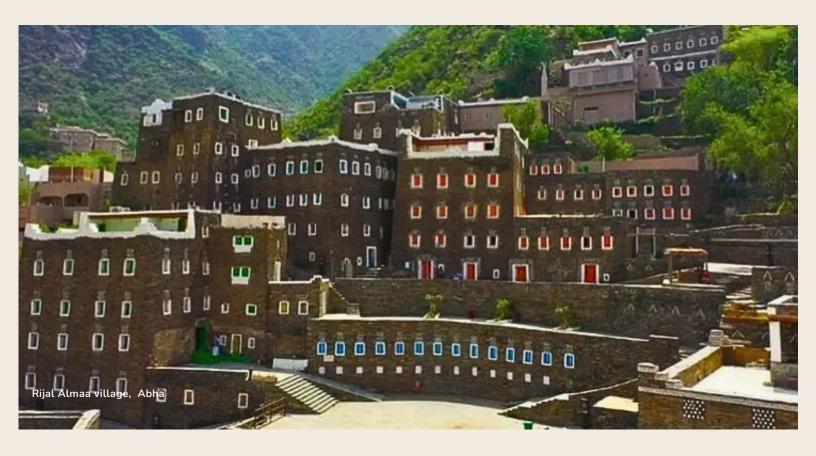
Depart the hotel and explore the town of **Abha** including the local market before heading out to the **Asir National Park** with its striking mountain scenery. Once inside the park visit the **Al-Musalla fort in Al-Abu Sarah**—a fortress which was built mostly to protect rather than as a residence. These forts can be found all over Asir region and bear witness to the area's history of civilization. Although closed to the public we have arranged for it to be open for the group.

After a local lunch in the park, explore the village of **Rijjal Almaa**, which was a natural corridor linking those coming from Yemen and the Levant to Mecca and Medina making it an important regional commercial center. The village consists of about 60 homes built from natural stone, clay and wood. Decoration is discreet but always effective with a few splashes of color or rendered mud bands around the windows. Doors are often carved, and the walls sometimes have vertical drains of lime plaster with strongly molded patterns just below the roof.

Our host this afternoon is **Ibrahim Naseer**, a Flower Man of Tihama. For centuries, these descendants of ancient tribes lived completely isolated. Their villages had no electricity or paved roads and they lived according to traditional tribal law. The flower crowns worn by the Flower Men are decorative and are worn even as they work in their farms.

Before dinner, meet with **Hashim Al Dabbagh**. From 2020 to 2022 he was an Advisor to the Minister of Investment. He is currently the CEO at the Aseer Development Authority (ASDA) which is tasked with implementing a regional strategic plan to oversee and direct development in Aseer.

This evening, drive to the home of **Ali Mughawi House** for a private dinner. Mr. Mughawi is a self-taught man, a writer, and scholar versed in the region's history. His wife, Fatima, is an artist who has learned the traditional motifs





Sunday, November 9 Al-Ula

B,L,D

Fly through Riyadh to Al-Ula, home to Saudi Arabia's most spectacular archaeological site at Mada'in Saleh built by the Nabataeans around 50 BC when they extended their influence south from Petra in Jordan. Mada'in Saleh, roughly halfway between Petra and Mecca, was the Nabatean's second city. At its greatest extent the Nabataean empire stretched north to Damascus, south to the borders of Yemen, and west to Gaza.

Explore the newly accessible ancient city of **Dadan**, located on the famed Incense Route and capital city of the **Lihyan** and **Dadan Kingdoms**. Frankincense formed a huge part of Dadan's economic success. Farmers in southern Arabia would harvest vast quantities of the resin for transport northwards to markets around the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

En route to the *Shaden Resort*, stop at the *Elephant Rock*, one of the wonders of Mada'in Saleh. This spectacular rock formation which resembles an elephant with its trunk touching the ground has become one of the area's iconic landmarks.

Check into the Shaden Resort.

Dinner this evening at the resort.

Monday, November 10 Al-Ula

B,L,D

Full day excursion to explore the Nabatean site of Mada'in Saleh which rivals Petra in Jordan in its beauty. The Nabataeans were a group of nomadic origins from northwest Arabia. They developed a centralized, monarchical state that controlled the northern end of the overland trade. Prosperous and skilled, they made notable advances in agriculture, water-use, masonry and ceramics in which they were much influenced by Greco-Roman styles.

After lunch return to Al-Ula to explore the **Old Town** which stands on the site of the biblical city of Dedan, but was founded with the ancient North Arabian Kingdom of Lihyan, which ruled from the 5th to 2nd century BC. Once a bustling civilization, these 800 tightly packed mud-brick and stone houses — parts of which are more than 2,000 years old — are now abandoned ruins, decaying in the hot desert sun.

Before returning to the hotel, meet with staff from **Royal Commission for Al-Ula** (RCU) led by **Dr. Rebecca Foote**, Head of Heritage & Archaeology. The RCU is a Saudi commission that was established in July 2017 to preserve and develop the 2,000 year-old-archeological and historical site of Mada'in Saleh.

Return to the resort for dinner and overnight.



Tuesday, November 11 Riyadh

B,L,I

Depart this morning for **Medina**—a drive of just under 4 hours. Enjoy a brief visit of the town, which has some of the richest history of the whole Arabian Peninsula. We have arranged a tour for the group of the **International Museum of the Prophet's Biography**, which is in front of Gate #37 of the Prophet's Mosque. This spacious museum includes a valuable collection of exhibits and videos that illustrate the path of the Prophet's migration, the sites he passed through, and the events that accompanied his journey.

We will pick up lunch to go before heading to the airport for our flight to Riyadh.

Arrive in **Riyadh**, the kingdom's capital city, which scarcely resembled a nation's capital when Ibn Saud captured it in 1902. The thick mud walls of the old city were not even half a mile long and the enclosed winding, narrow alleys were barely wide enough for two people to walk side by side. However, with the discovery of oil, Riyadh has boomed so that the city is almost unrecognizable from 25 years ago.

Check into the *Rosh Rayana by Rotana*. Dinner this evening at the hotel.

Wednesday, November 12 *Riyadh* B,L,D

Visit to the newly opened National Museum and, close by, the Al Masmak Fort, the oldest complete building in Riyadh. Built in 1865 for prince Abdurrahman ibn Sulaiman AlDabaan under the Emirate of Jabal Shammar during the Second Saudi State, the fortress was given the name Masmak, the Arabic word for a tall, strong building with thick walls.

The fortress played an integral role in the Unification of Saudi Arabia, with the Battle of Riyadh, one of the most important conflicts of the Saudi unification, taking place in the fort. Since 1995, the fortress has been converted into a museum showcasing one of the most important landmarks of Saudi heritage.

Continue to the **Prince Saud al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies** for lunch and a discussion on Saudi politics led by **Dr. Mansour Al-Marzouqi**, Assistant Professor of Political Science,
Director of the Center for Strategic Studies, and Director of the
Center for American Studies, Prince Saud Al-Faisal Institute for
Diplomatic Studies.

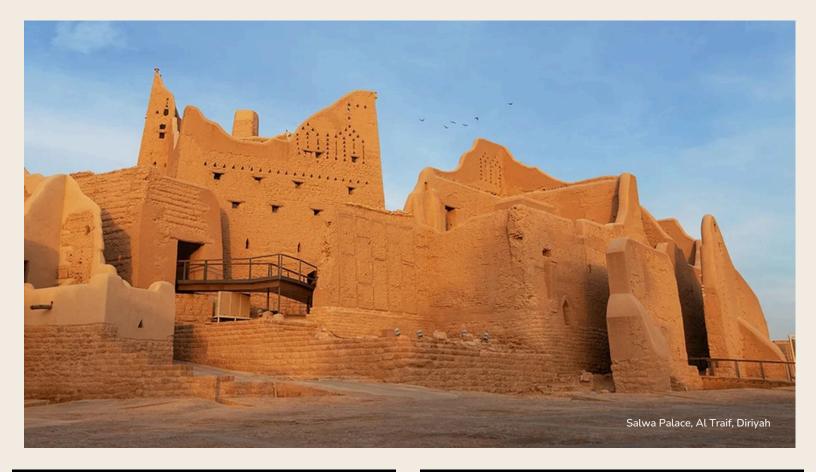
After lunch drive to the Al Rajhi Mosque for a private discussion of the role of Islam in Saudi life and society. The Al Rajhi Grand Mosque is the largest mosque in Riyadh and is considered an architectural marvel and one of the most significant Islamic institutions in the city.

End the day at the archaeological site of **Diriyah** whose zenith as capital of most of Arabia came during the reign of Saud the Great who ruled here from 1802-1814.

When examining Saudi Arabia it is important to remember that there are two strains of tradition which are inseparably bound to the political history of the country: family and religion.

Dinner tonight at the wonderful **Takya restaurant** opened by three women with the goal of serving traditional Saudi cuisine with a modern twist. Joining us tonight will be several Saudi guests that we have invited.





Thursday, November 13 *Riyadh*

B,L

Depart the hotel to visit the **Al Faisal Museum for Arab and Islamic Art** located within the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. Meeting the group will be **Rasha Al-Fawaz**, the director of the museum.

Continue to the **Ministry of Investment** for a discussion and an opportunity to learn more about their work. The planned transformation of Saudi Arabia under the Vision 2030 plan is unlocking new opportunities and the Ministry of Investment of Saudi Arabia (MISA) is facilitating access to these opportunities by developing a vibrant cross-government investment ecosystem, while supporting businesses throughout their investment journey. Through a network of dynamic business centers across the Kingdom, MISA partners with local and international businesses of all scales and sizes—from startups to blue chip multinationals—to help make investing in the Kingdom as streamlined and simple as possible.

Close by is the **American Embassy** where we will, schedule permitting, visit with staff members. The American Embassy in Saudi Arabia includes a team of over a thousand Americans, Saudis, and 20 other nationalities who are spread between Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dhahran.

Dinner at leisure.

Friday, November 14 Dammam

 $B_{-}L_{-}D$

This morning take a high speed train heading north- east to **Al Hofuf** – capital of the **Al-Hasa Oasis** and one of the great oases of the eastern Province and the first UNESCO-listed oasis.

As home to over 3 million palm trees, the ruins of several abandoned cities, over 150 sparkling springs, serene green expanses, and so much more, the Al-Hasa Oasis which is 60 miles inland from the Arabian Gulf, is the largest oasis in the world. Recognizing its unique heritage, UNESCO in 2018, inscribed Al-Hasa as Saudi Arabia's fifth World Heritage Site, joining Mada'in Saleh, historic Jeddah, Diriyah and the rock art of Ha'il on the World Heritage Site list.

Continue on to a private farm for lunch to learn more about the area's date production, named in polls as the best dates in the world. Spread out over just under 50 square miles, the date groves of Al-Hasa produce some five tons on a daily basis.

After lunch, drive just under two hours to **Al Khobar**. Upon arrival, transfer to the *Le Meridien Al Khobar* for dinner and overnight.





Saturday , November 15 *Dammam/Al Khobar* B,L,l

Depart the hotel to drive to the **US Consulate** where the group will meet with the team here.

From here, drive to the **King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture**, an arts center developed by Saudi Aramco incorporating a museum, library, cinema, auditorium and lecture halls. It is known locally as "Ithra", an Arabic word meaning enrichment.

After lunch at the center, schedule permitting, visit the **ARAMCO** headquarters for an extensive tour. Started in the 1920s with Bahrain Petroleum Co., a subsidiary of Standard Oil of California, the Saudi government gave the company a concession to explore for oil in Saudi Arabia. After four years, Dammam's Well Number 7, brought success to the company in 1938.

Farewell dinner this evening.

Sunday, November 16 Return

Transfer to the airport for return flights.

Pricing & Inclusions

12-24 paying travelers: \$9,890 Single room supplement: \$2,400

Included

- 1. Accommodation as listed
- Jeddah: Jeddah Sheraton Hotel (Sea-view rooms)
- Abha: Abha Palace (standard rooms)
- Al-Ula: Shaden Resort Al -Ula (standard rooms with private bathrooms)
- Riyadh: Rosh Rayhaan by Rotana (standard rooms)
- Al Khobar : Le Meridien Al Khobar (deluxe Sea-view rooms)
- 2. Meals as listed in the program with mineral water and soft drinks.
- 3. All sightseeing in a deluxe, air-conditioned bus
- 4. All entrance fees listed
- 5. All special events listed
- 6. The services of a local Saudi guide who will travel with the group throughout
- 7. The services of a DH tour manager
- 8. All gratuities

Not Included

- 1. International airfare
- 2. Domestic Airfares of \$700
- · Jeddah to Abha
- · Abha to Riyadh
- · Riyadh to Al-Ula
- · Medinah to Riyadh
- 3. Excess luggage charge
- 4. Trip insurance
- 5. E-Visa fees for Saudi Arabia (approximately \$125) which is done online
- 6. Items of a purely personal nature
- 7. Anything not listed



BAHRAIN EXTENSION

Sunday, November 16 Manama

 B,L

After breakfast meet your Bahrani guide, Mr. Fadhel Abbas and begin driving to Bahrain along the King Fahd Causeway. Continue on to Manama, Bahrain's capital city which is home to the majority of the island's population.

Once you cross the causeway, visit the village of **Al Jasra** which offers a look into the traditional arts and crafts that many of the villages in Bahrain have historically produced. The **Al Jasra Handicrafts Center** offers an excellent introduction to basket weaving, pottery, wood working, traditional musical instruments, boat-making and cloth weaving using the traditional methods.

Continue on to the recently opened **Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Center for Culture and Research** which opened its doors once again as a forum for debate and exchange on current cultural, social and political issues.

We have arranged lunch at a local restaurant.

Our next stop is at the grand Al Fateh Grand Mosque which is both Bahrain's largest place of worship and among one of the largest mosques in the world. The mosque was built under the patronage of the late Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa in 1987 and was named after Ahmed Al Fateh, the first monarch of Bahrain.

Transfer to the *Merchant House*, a boutique property located next to the vibrant Bab Al Bahrain soug.

Evening at leisure.

Monday, November 17 Manama

 $\mathsf{B}\mathsf{L}\mathsf{D}$

After breakfast this morning, visit **A'Ali** where hundreds and hundreds of the Dilmun burial mounds can be seen. UNESCO World Heritage Committee added Bahrain's Dilmun Burial Mounds to the World Heritage List in 2019 for its "globally unique characteristics. The burial grounds, located in the western part of the island nation, include 21 archeological sites built between 2050 and 1750 BC, which demonstrate evidence of the early Dilmun civilization, when Bahrain became a trade hub.

Continue on to the **Barbar Temple**, a complex of three key Dilmun relics probably dedicated to Enzak – the god of wisdom and the titular god of Dilmun.

After lunch, visit the **Bahrain National Museum**, a superb museum that traces the archaeological development of the region. Through sculpture and ceramics, reconstructed burial mounds, Arabic calligraphy and illuminated Korans, the different periods of Bahrain's history are presented.

Before returning to the hotel, stop at the **Bahrain World Trade** Center a 787-feet-high, 50-floor, twin tower complex located in Manama, Bahrain. Designed by the multi-national architectural firm Atkins, construction on the towers was completed in 2008. It is the first skyscraper in the world to integrate wind turbines into its design. Close by is the **Bahrain Bay Development**, an opulent mixeduse development boasting three exceptional areas: The Wharf, The Gardens and The Park. With stylish dining spots, waterfront activities and stunning art and architecture, Bahrain has quickly become a city hotspot.

Farewell dinner this evening.

Tuesday, November 18 Return

Return home.

Extension Pricing & Inclusions

8-10 paying travelers: \$1,100 Single room supplement: \$350

Included

- 1. Accommodation as listed
- 2. Meals as listed in the program with mineral water and soft drinks.
- 3. All sightseeing in a deluxe, air-conditioned mini-van
- 4. All entrance fees listed
- 5. All special events listed
- 6. The services of a local guide in Bahrain who will travel with the group throughout
- 7. The services of a DH tour manager
- 8. All gratuities to tour escort, drivers and local guide

Not included

- 1.International airfare
- 2. Trip insurance
- 3. Visa fees
- 4. Items of a purely personal nature
- 5. Anything not listed

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

National Trust Tours has contracted with Distant Horizons to organize this tour.

Reservations and Payments: A \$1,500 per person deposit, will reserve a place for participants on this program. The balance of the trip is due August 2, 2025 and must be paid by check or wire transfer.

Tour Cost and Inclusions: Tour cost is based on rates at the time of printing (December 2024) and is subject to change with or without previous notice. If there is a price increase prior to the day of departure in the basic costs, such increases may be passed on to the participant. The minimum group size of this departure is 12 paying participants. Should the number of participants fall below this number, a small group surcharge and/or revised staffing could apply.

Tour cost includes accommodations in hotels as outlined in the itinerary based on double occupancy, prices listed are based on two persons sharing a twin room. Distant Horizons reserves the right to substitute hotels for those named in the brochure when necessary. Distant Horizons will do all possible for single participants to satisfy requests to share rooms. On occasions when it is not possible, the single room supplement will apply. If Distant Horizons assigns you a roommate and your roommate cancels or changes their mind about sharing a room, you will be liable for the single room supplement.

Breakfast (B), lunches (L) and dinners (D) are included as specified in the itinerary. Mineral water and soft drinks are included with lunch and dinner.

An educational program with meetings as described in the program. Such meetings are dependent on people's schedules and activities and events may be changed or moved.

Also included are entrance fees to monuments; bottled water kept on the tour vehicle; the services of an excellent Saudi guide, the services of a Distant Horizons tour manager; and basic gratuities to the local guide; tour manager and driver.

Tour Price Does Not Include: International airfare, domestic airfare of \$700 within Saudi Arabia, excess luggage charge, trip insurance, E-Visa fees for Saudi Arabia approximately (\$125) which is done online, items of a purely personal nature, anything not listed.

Cancellation and Refund Policy: Notification of cancellation must be received in writing. At the time we receive your written cancellation, the following penalties will apply: • Up until 90 days before departure: \$1,000 of the \$1,500 deposit • 89-61 days before departure: 50% of the trip cost • 60 days before departure: No refund is due. No refunds can be issued for occasional meals once the tour has commenced. The tour can also be cancelled due to low enrollment. Neither National Trust Tours nor Distant Horizons accepts liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets purchased in conjunction with the tour.

Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance: We strongly advise that all travelers purchase trip cancellation and interruption insurance as coverage against a covered unforeseen emergency that may force you to cancel or leave trip while it is in progress. A brochure describing coverage will be sent to you upon receipt of your reservation.

Medical Information and COVID-19: Participation in this program requires that you be in good health and able to walk a mile a day without assistance. There are occasions when the program might require you to be on your feet for up to an hour at a time. It is essential that persons with any medical problems or dietary restrictions make them known to us well before departure. We will do our best to accommodate all dietary restrictions. There are currently no COVID restrictions in place in Saudi Arabia, If the situation changes, travelers will be alerted. Our aim is to protect our travelers, guest speakers, local staff, and communities we visit.

Itinerary Changes & Trip Delay: This itinerary is based on information available at the time of printing (December 2024) and is subject to change. We reserve the right to change a program's dates, staff, itineraries, or accommodations as conditions warrant. If a trip must be delayed, or the itinerary changed, due to bad weather, road conditions, transportation delays, airline schedules, government intervention, sickness or other contingency for which National Trust Tours or Distant Horizons or its agents cannot make provision, the cost of delays or changes are not included.

Limitations of Liability: National Trust Tours and Distant Horizons its Owners, Agents, and Employees act only as the agent for any transportation carrier, hotel, ground operator, or other suppliers of services connected with this program ("other providers"), and the other providers are solely responsible and liable for providing their respective services. National Trust Tours and Distant Horizons shall not be held liable for (A) any damage to, or loss of, property or injury to, or death of, persons occasioned directly or indirectly by an act or omission of any other provider, including but not limited to any defect in any aircraft, or vehicle operated or provided by such other provider, and (B) any loss or damage due to delay, cancellation, or disruption in any manner caused by the laws, regulations, acts or failures to act, demands, orders, or interpositions of any government or any subdivision or agent thereof, or by acts of God, strikes, fire, flood, war, rebellion, terrorism, insurrection, sickness, quarantine, pandemics, epidemics, theft, or any other cause(s) beyond their control. The participant waives any claim against National Trust Tours/Distant Horizons for any such loss, damage, injury, or death. By registering for the trip, the participant certifies that he/she does not have any mental, physical, or other condition or disability that would create a hazard for him/herself or other participants. National Trust Tours/Distant Horizons shall not be liable for any air carrier's cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a non-refundable ticket to or from the departure city. Baggage and personal effects are at all times the sole responsibility of the traveler. Reasonable changes in the itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well-being of the passengers.

Registration: National Trust Tours (CST#2088800-40). Distant Horizons (CST #2046776-40)

From Ancient Trade Routes to Contemporary Society November 4-16, 2025



Please register by phone by calling National Trust ours at (888) 484-8785. Your deposit of \$1,500 will be collected at this time.

The completed form can be emailed to info@nationaltrusttours.com.	
Traveler Name 1	Traveler Name 2
Address / City / State / Zip 1	Address / City / State / Zip 2
Home and/or Mobile Phone 1	Home and/or Mobile Phone 2
E-mail Address 1	E-mail Address 2
SINGLETRAVELERS ONLY: If this is a reservation for one person, please indicate:	National Trust Membership
I plan to share accommodations with	I am/We are National Trust members. My/Our membership # is
ORI wish to have single accommodations.	
ORI'd like to know about possible roommates.	I am /We are not National Trust Members. Please enroll me/us as members. (\$20 individual; \$30 family)
I am a non-smoker / smoker	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Signature	Date
Signature	