

Youth-led ventures reshape tourism in Jabal Akhdar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

High above the plains of Dakhiyah, Jabal Akhdar is redefining tourism through a wave of youth-led initiatives that blend heritage, agriculture and enterprise.

Known for its mild summer climate and terraced farms, the wilyat is drawing visitors with projects rooted in sustainability and local identity. From eco-rest areas to restored mountain villages and olive groves, young Omanis are investing in experiences that go beyond sightseeing.

In the village of Saq, Ali bin Nasser Al Falah has developed the Ader Rest Area in response to rising visitor numbers. Built using local stone and pine wood, the project features outdoor seating, cabins, a cafe and swimming pools. Fruit trees including pomegranate, grape, peach and olive surround the property.

"These heritage-based projects help strengthen community tourism and create income for artisan families and craftsmen," Al Falah said.

In Al Suwgra, a 400-year-old abandoned village has been brought back to life by its youth. Traditional houses have been restored using gravel and wood from juniper and wild olive trees. A suspension bridge, paved



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ALIBIN NASSER AL FALAH



paths and signage now guide visitors through the mountain settlement. Abdullah bin Nasser Al Sharqi said more than ROSOO,000 has been invested in restoration and

operations between 2020 and 2025. The village welcomed over 30,000 visitors this year and hosted more than 700 overnight guests.

"Al Suwgra proves that young

people can turn challenges into opportunities," he said. Visitors can stay in heritage lodges, join craft workshops, explore caves and hiking trails, or learn traditional farming and

sheep herding. The village also promotes stargazing and mountain climbing activities. Online booking and digital marketing have expanded its reach.

Sustainability underpins the model. Plastic use has been reduced, local labour is employed and traditional crafts revived. Tourism revenues and online sales of local products create new income streams for residents.

Agriculture is also central to the transformation. In Al Manaher, a project to plant 300 olive trees under the village endowment has been launched at a cost exceeding RO62,000. Supervised by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the initiative is supported by Oman LNG, Bank Muscat and Galfar.

Mahmoud bin Salem Al Toubi, endowment official for the village, said the project carries environmental and economic value. Highly varied terrain including Koroni, Coratina and Arbaqa has been selected. Production is expected to begin next year, targeting local and international markets.

Other initiatives, including the restoration of Suwgra and rose farming and distillation experiences, are strengthening Jabal Akhdar's position as a centre for sustainable agricultural tourism.



Ancient rock art discovered in Khaboura

Our Correspondent
Khaboura

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has announced the discovery of a new archaeological site in the Hajar Al Sina'an area of the wilyat of Khaboura in North Batinah, featuring a collection of rock carvings and drawings dating back to ancient periods.

The newly discovered site adds to the rich archaeological and cultural legacy of Oman and offers fresh insights into the lives and symbolic expressions of early inhabitants of the region.

According to the ministry, the site includes a prominent rock formation bearing carvings and drawings created using the rock-pecking technique. The depictions include animal figures, human forms and geometric symbols, reflecting the close relationship

between ancient Omanis and their surrounding natural environment across different historical eras.

The ministry stated that the discovery forms part of its ongoing efforts to document, preserve and study archaeological sites across the Sultanate. Officials noted that the carvings serve as an important

visual record of early human life and environmental conditions that prevailed during those periods.

Specialists are continuing archaeological and technical studies at the site while authorities undertake measures to preserve and protect the findings. The ministry said these efforts will further enhance the historical and tourism value of the site and reinforce Oman's reputation as a country with a deep-rooted and authentic cultural heritage.



ROP arrests female gang for residential robberies in Muscat

Muscat - The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has apprehended a female criminal gang of Arab nationality involved in a series of residential robberies across Muscat governorate.

According to official reports, the group employed a deceptive strategy by using beggars as a professional cover to monitor properties and execute their criminal plans without drawing

suspicion. The investigation revealed that the suspects targeted several homes, taking advantage of their disguise to gain proximity to private residences before carrying out the thefts.

Following a detailed operation, the police were able to identify and detain the individuals involved in the illegal activities. Legal proceedings have been initiated against the suspects as the

authorities continue to prioritise the safety and security of residential neighbourhoods. ROP said it remains vigilant in monitoring such fraudulent activities.

Pact signed for funding 100 overseas scholarships

Muscat - OQ Group signed an agreement with Takatuf Oman on Wednesday to provide 100 international scholarships over five years under the Oman Scholars programme, with 20 scholarships to be awarded annually.

The Oman Scholars Programme (OSP), also known as Ruwad Oman, is designed to provide Omani students with a comprehensive educational journey at leading international universities, equipping them with the academic knowledge and professional skills needed to contribute to the Sultanate's transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

The initiative reflects OQ's continued commitment to developing national talent and strengthening its long-standing partnership with Takatuf Oman in creating educational and career pathways aligned with labour market demands and the rapid transformations taking place across economic and development sectors.

Ali Mohamed Al Lawati, Chief People and Technology Officer at OQ, said investment in national talent remains a cornerstone of the group's long-term strategy. He noted that the Ruwad Oman continues to offer educational and professional development opportunities aimed at preparing Omani youth with the expertise and competencies required to support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.



ICAI Muscat (Oman) Chapter successfully concludes Annual General Meeting on 4th May 2026 and welcomes new managing committee

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India - Muscat (Oman) Chapter (Under the sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS)) successfully conducted its Annual General Meeting (AGM), marking another significant milestone in the Chapter's journey of professional excellence, governance, and member engagement.

The AGM witnessed active participation from members, where key agenda items including the Chapter's annual activities, financial matters, committee reports, member initiatives, and strategic roadmap for the upcoming term were deliberated upon and duly considered.

The AGM also marked an important leadership transition for the Chapter.

The Chapter expressed its sincere appreciation to CA Umesh Bhome for his exemplary leadership, dedication, and contributions during his tenure as Chairperson. Under his stewardship, the Chapter continued to strengthen its professional footprint, enhance member participation, and elevate its standing within the professional and business community in Oman.

In recognition of his valuable guidance and continued support, CA Umesh Bhome will now continue his association with the Chapter in the capacity of Advisor to the Chapter, ensuring continuity, mentorship, and strategic direction for the incoming committee.

The newly constituted Managing Committee for the upcoming term was formally introduced as follows:

- CA Sangeetha Sureshkumar, Chairperson & Women Members' Excellence Sub-Committee Lead
- CA Badi Narayan Subudhi, Vice-Chairperson & CFO Program Lead
- CA Ashish Subhadar, Secretary
- CA Abhishek R. Vaidhya, Treasurer & Sponsorship Sub-Committee Lead
- CA Umesh Bhome, Immediate Past Chairperson & IT, PR, Media, Legal & Compliance Sub-Committee Lead
- CA Gaurav Kapoor, Past Chairman, Sports and

Cultural Sub-Committee Lead & Salalah Sub-Committee Lead

- CA Aji James Kurian, CPE Sub-Committee Lead
- CA Jay Duseja, Membership Sub-Committee, Students Affairs Lead and Sohar Sub-Committee Lead

The Chapter looks forward to a new term of strengthened professional initiatives, knowledge-sharing platforms, member development, and greater collaboration within the finance and business ecosystem of Oman.

Following the AGM, members attended an insightful Continuing Professional Education (CPE) session on the theme "Ethics, Integrity and Accountability: Reinforcing the Foundations of the Profession".

The session involved a panel discussion with distinguished speaker CA Charanjit Singh Nanda, Past President of ICAI, and CA Sahil Arora, Chief of Corporate Affairs and Business Development, BNW Developments, who shared deep insights on the evolving responsibilities of professionals in

maintaining ethical standards, reinforcing public trust, and upholding accountability in a rapidly changing business and regulatory environment.

The session served as a timely reminder that ethics and integrity remain the bedrock of the profession and continue to drive the credibility and trust placed upon Chartered Accountants globally.

CBFS plays a pivotal role in enabling these initiatives, reinforcing its position as a national hub for professional development, executive education, and knowledge advancement in the financial sector. Through such strategic collaborations, CBFS continues to facilitate high-quality knowledge exchange platforms, strengthen industry-relevant competencies, support the development of future-ready finance professionals and contribute to the broader knowledge economy and professional ecosystem in Oman.

The ICAI Muscat Chapter, in partnership with CBFS, remains committed to fostering professional excellence, leadership development, and continuous learning for its members and the wider business community.

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