Tour 3  Hiking in the Wadi Massilah

Day 1  Arrival in Sana’a

Day 2  Sana’a – Jiblah – Ibb - Al-Janad – Taiz

Day 3  Taiz – Aden

Day 4  Aden – Bir Ali

Day 5  Bir Ali – Al-Mukalla – Sharmah

Day 6  Sharmah – Seyhut - Wadi Massilah

Day 7  Wadi Massilah

Day 8  Wadi Massilah

Day 9  Wadi Massilah – Qabr al-Nabi Hud/Hadramaut

Day 10  Qabr al-Nabi Hud – Aynat – Tarim – Sayun

Day 11  Sayun – Shibam/Hadramaut – Wadi Dawan – Sayun

Day 12  Sayun – desert

Day 13  Drive through the desert to Marib

Day 14  Marib – Sana’a

Day 15  Sana’a – departure
Tour 3  Hiking in the Wadi Massilah

This route leads along major roads to the most famous historic sites in Yemen. It combines visits to places important in the cultural history of the country with two days' bathing on lonely beaches by the Arabian Sea and long walks in the unique countryside around the Wadi Massilah.

This is the largest and longest wadi (valley) in Yemen, and links the Hadramaut region with the Arabian Sea. In ancient times, the trading caravans travelled on camels from Tarim in the Hadramaut more than 400 km to Qana harbour at the fishing village of Bir Ali. Camels, together with the small, short-haired oryx antelopes, still form the economic basis of this sparsely populated but richly cultivated valley. The landscape between the sandstone cliffs is breathtaking, and the journeys through all the fords are full of variety. During the four-day journey through the wadi, we will spend four or five hours walking every day; the rest of the way will be covered in the land-cruiser. Nights are spent in the Wadi Massilah, on the beaches and in the desert, in single tents.

Day 1  Arrival in Sana‘a
Transfer to the hotel in a traditional house in the old town. First tour of the old town (a World Heritage site) with its souq

Day 2  Sana‘a – Jiblah – Ibb – Al-Janad – Taiz
Morning: drive southwards through the „green Yemen“, a varied, hilly country richly fertile during the travel months, with three stops before Taiz. In Jiblah we walk through the almost completely preserved old town to the building complex (burial mosque, palace, courtyard) of Queen Arwa bint Ahmed, who reigned in the 11th century. Visit to the courtyard mosque at Al-Janad, and a stroll through the narrow, winding lanes of the old town of Ibb, with its typical façades.
Overnight stay in a hotel near the centre of Taiz.

Day 3  Taiz – Aden
In Taiz we visit the Al-Ashrafiah mosque, which stands on ancient, recently discovered foundations and has an ablution fountain for ritual washing. We drive on half-way up the Jabel Saber, with a view over Taiz, the third-largest town in Yemen, and continue to Aden, where we spend the night.

Day 4  Aden – Bir Ali
Morning: tour of Aden and visit to the historic water reservoir and to Steamers Point, where the passengers from the big steamships used to check in during the British colonial period. Drive to the south coast, along the Gulf of Aden, with a detour into the interior via Habban to Bir Ali. Bathing and camping in a fantastic sandy bay at the foot of the Husn-al-Ghurab (crow’s nest), a promontory with a stone-age settlement overlooking the ruins of the ancient harbour of Qana, now sunk under the sea. This is the end of the Incense Road, which for centuries was the basis of Arabia’s trading wealth. Overnight camp.
Day 5  Bir Ali – Mukalla – Sharmah
After a morning swim, we continue along the south coast. White sandy beaches alternate with black lava rock. We climb an extinct crater with a lake high above the sea. We make a short visit to Mukalla, the rapidly growing trade metropolis of the south, and pitch camp in the bay of Sharmah, the beach where giant turtles lay their eggs.

Day 6  Sharmah – Seyhut – Wadi Massilah
After a swim, we drive on to Seyhut, where we tour the fine though sadly dilapidated old town and buy provisions for the next days in the Wadi Massilah, which we enter on the track at the mouth of the stream. Overnight camp by the water.

Day 7  Wadi Massilah
Schedule for the next three days: after breakfast, a four-hour hike up the valley, then midday break, siesta and a further hour’s walk. Then a drive up-river, through many fords, with opportunities to swim in the deeper waters. Overnight camp at a watering-place for camels.

Day 8  Wadi Massilah
The trip through the wadi passes first through river plantations, then grazing areas for camels and goats, and finally, before the Hadramaut, through fertile plantations of fruit and palm trees. Overnight camp at a watering-place for camels.

Day 9  Wadi Massilah - Qabr an Nabi Hud/Hadramaut
At the upper end, the wadi widens into a landscape of dunes with small villages. Anyone unable to walk the full distances can of course go in the car. Camp in Qabr an Nabi Hud.

Day 10  Qabr an Nabi Hud – Aynat – Tarim – Sayun
At the foot of a rock, an architecturally impressive pilgrims’ village grew up around the mausoleum of the prophet Hud. We drive on, with a short break in Aynat (cemetery with tombs and shrines), to the more densely populated Hadramaut, stopping in the town of Tarim, famous for its Islamic scholars and for the highest minaret in Arabia (50 m), and on to Sayun. Overnight stay in hotel.

Day 11  Sayun – Shibam/Hadramaut – Wadi Dawan – Sayun
The Hadramaut, a name familiar to us mainly through a kind of coffee, is a broad fertile valley in central Yemen, widening and flattening westwards between imposing limestone cliffs to the desert. It has always been an important and wealthy trading place. Evidence of the former strong ties with the Indian sub-continent is not only the maharajah style of the splendid palaces, but also the appearance of the inhabitants. The main towns are Tarim, Sayun (with a museum in the former palace), and Shibam/Hadramaut, world-famous for its ten-storey clay-built houses. We drive on to al-Qatn and then south in to the Wadi Dawan, the most famous side valley in the Hadramaut. The beauty of this long north-south wadi is its almost pink sandstone cliffs, which become closer together in the upper reaches. The valley floor is densely covered with tropical vegetation, and intensive farming is carried on. In order to save valuable arable land, the towns and villages consist of multi-storey buildings close to the rock. Return to Sayun; overnight stay in hotel.
Day 12  **Sayun – desert**  
We continue west via Shibam and al-Qatn, and from there into the desert, accompanied by Bedouins. Walking tour with Bedouins; overnight camp in the desert.

Day 13  **On through the desert to Marib**  
A drive of several hours takes us through the „Ramlat al Sabatayn“ desert, a branch of the great Arabian desert Rub Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). The desert landscape is full of variety, with interesting stone, sand, dune and mountain formations. Overnight stay in hotel in Marib.

Day 14  **Marib – Sana’a**  
In Marib, the capital city of the legendary Bilqis, Queen of Sheba, one can visit the following historic sites: north and south sluice-gates of the Sabaeans dam; the moon (sun?) temple of Bilqis, the Almaqa temple with 8m-high monoliths, or Old Marib, the now almost deserted mediaeval settlement outside the new town. On to Sana’a by the north route, over high passes and qat plantations. Overnight stay in hotel in Sana’a.

Day 15  **Sana’a**  
Visit to the re-opened National Museum, the famous old town and the world’s oldest souq, with an unlimited choice of spices, Arabian beauty products, finely crafted work of silver, brass or coral, antique carpets and textiles.  
Departure.