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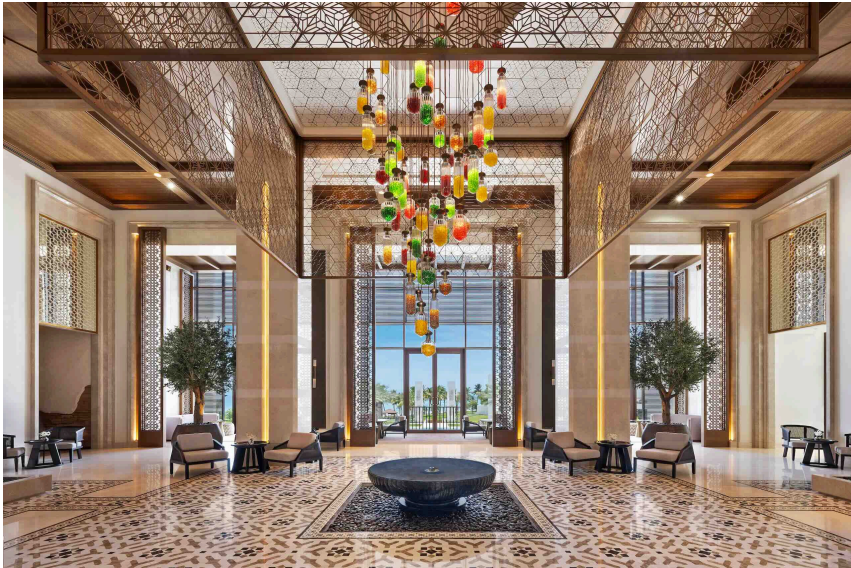
LIFESTYLE

# What It's Like to Stay at Mandarin Oriental, Muscat, an Enchanting Oceanfront Resort in Oman's Port Capital

Vibrant cultural influences are woven into the walls of this beach-facing property.

BY JEN PAOLINI | MARCH 8, 2025

9 MINUTE READ



*Welcome to Checking In, a review series in which our editors and contributors rate the best luxury hotels based on a rigorous—and occasionally tongue-in-cheek—10-point system: Each question answered “yes” gets one point. Will room service bring you caviar? Does your suite have its own butler? Does the bathroom have a bidet? Find out below.*

**Describe the hotel in three words:** Discrete Omani elegance.

**What’s the deal?**

Muscat, the underrated seaside capital of Oman, often overlooked for its more glamorous neighbours in the UAE, is growing its tourism appeal with the recently opened Mandarin Oriental, Muscat, marking the hotel group’s first property in the country.

Mandarin Oriental, Muscat calls the prestigious beachfront neighbourhood of Shatti Al Qurum home, among embassies, consulates, cultural centres, and whitewashed townhouses and villas, with the imposing Hajar mountain range standing tall in the background.

Comprising an urban resort as well as branded residences, the sprawling low-rise

structure—Oman has put a ban on skyscrapers in place to maintain the sultanate nation's native architecture and authentic character—has 150 rooms and suites and 156 homes with full-length windows and balconies overlooking the Gulf of Oman or the surrounding cityscape.

Art and local architectural elements are prominent features of the Xavier Cartron-designed interiors. Celebrated artist Alia al Farsi was commissioned to create the signature fan for Mandarin Oriental, Muscat, a motif present across the hospitality group's many locations—it is proudly exhibited as the first piece of art that guests come across when entering the hotel through a set of grand, wooden Omani doors, inviting them to learn about the rich tapestry of cultures that define the sultanate. Exquisite craftsmanship is evident throughout, with fountains, soaring ceilings, and vibrant, colourful chandeliers dotting the wide-open shared spaces. Intricate patterns, taking design cues from the geometric latticework seen on *mashrabiya* oriel windows, create a sense of place. Local materials like Desert Rose marble and ashwood are used for the furnishings, and artisanal heritage objects like the traditional *kuma* Omani

headwear and *khanjar* dagger echoed in the décor details.



Mandarin Oriental, Muscat pool.

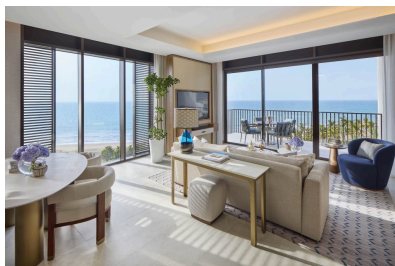
For first-timers to Oman, the extensive MO experience programme offered here should tick several boxes. From guided half- to full-day tours through Muscat focused on art, culture, and architecture to take in mosques, souks, museums, forts, and palaces, to water-based activities in and around Shatti Al Qurum and the Daymaniyat Islands, sitting still will be a conscious choice rather than a circumstantial consequence. If Oman's striking and stark landscapes call to you, save a day or two for exploring the plunging canyons and jagged peaks of the Jebel Akhdar mountains, the Bimmah sinkhole and Wadi Shab ravine, and adventures in the Wahiba Sands desert. Not to mention, the hotel has an exclusive collaboration with the Royal Opera House Muscat for performances, meet-and-greets, and special dining experiences.



Presidential Suite.

### **The best room?**

Mandarin Oriental, Muscat has not one, but two Presidential Suites. If you are travelling with an entourage, the 221-square-metre two-bedroom option among them is the more suitable choice, as these connecting accommodations offer the luxuries of a large dining room and breakfast bar plus pantry, a spacious living area, a study, and a long terrace with outdoor furniture. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out across the water, and the master bedroom is appointed with a dressing room and en-suite bathroom, while the second bedroom, furnished with two double beds, comes with its own bathroom with a separate bath and rain shower.



Premier Sea View Suite.

**Did they greet you by name at check-in?**

Yes, the staff warmly received us at the entrance, took care of our bags, and guided us to the check-in counter, where the formalities were handled swiftly and with smiles all round.

**Was a welcome drink ready and waiting when you arrived?**

Yes. We were warmly welcomed with cups of jasmine tea, blended with aromatic rose water and lemon, an appetite-whetting introduction to unique crossroads of the Mandarin Oriental, Muscat where Omani and pan-Asian influences meet. A generous assortment of stuffed dates, with such fillings as almonds, walnuts, and pistachios, was waiting in the room, too.



Deluxe Mountain View King.

**Private butler for every room?**

Butlers are provided to Presidential Suites and Royal Suites guests, but Mandarin Oriental, Muscat can also arrange this service for other room categories if needed. Even without a butler, we found the staff to be

responsive and diligent in fulfilling our requests.

**Is the sheet thread count higher than 300?**

An even 300. If you like customising your sleeping experience, call for a pillow menu.



Executive Suite bathroom.

**Is there a heated floor in the bathroom? What about a bidet?**

No heated floors, but chances are, there's no need for them, as Muscat's coldest month, January, experiences average temperatures of 17 degrees Celsius. As for bidets, the bathrooms come with a standalone bidet, as well as a handheld bidet spray.

**Are the toiletries full-sized?**

Yes. Barcelona-founded Natura Bissé is the brand of choice at Mandarin Oriental, Muscat, and the range of toiletries and bath products is scented with rosemary and white tea. Separate travel-sized tubes of the same, with bath salts and loofah, sit by the soaking tub.



The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Muscat.

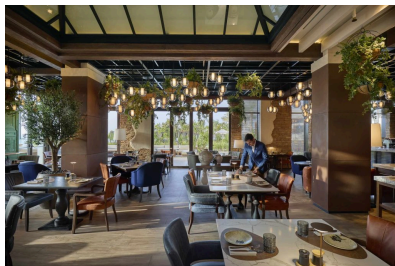
**Is there a private pool for the room's exclusive use? How are the spa and gym?**

No private pools, but the 30-metre outdoor pool, lined with cabanas, is open to all guests, and there's a dedicated splash pool for kids as well. As for the Spa, Mandarin Oriental, Muscat boasts a 1,200-square-metre wellness hub with treatment rooms, a couple's suite with a private balcony, relaxation lounges, a meditation terrace, and a mosaic-adorned *hammam*. Asian- and Arabic-inspired healing traditions are incorporated into the holistic spa programme, designed to pamper from head to toe. Oman is famed for its frankincense trees, so expect the scent to waft up across the board, especially in the **Mountain Restoration** ritual, where it is combined with roses and pomegranates for a rejuvenating experience.

Otherwise, the **Rose Quartz** ritual, taking inspiration from ancient sand-bathing therapies in the Arabian desert, uses singing bowls, Damask rose from the Jabal al

Akhdar mountains, essential oils, botanical actives, and warm rose quartz stones to induce relaxation, improve circulation, release toxins from the body, and infuse your skin with a glowing complexion.

One special feature of note in the fitness centre is the Hyperice station, stacked with Hypervolt handheld percussive massage guns, Hypersphere precision massage balls, and Vyper vibration foam rollers. All this, in addition to a Visbody 3D body scanner and range of Technogym cardio and weight-training machines, means that guests can fully take charge of their fitness routine, from pre-workout physical assessment to post-workout recovery.



Essenza.

### **Is the restaurant worth its salt?**

Yes. Dining is absolutely a highlight at the Mandarin Oriental, Muscat. Essenza, the Italian restaurant, starts off with an open-air lounge on the top floor for drinks and *cicchetti* light bites,

before continuing to the rustic dining room below, with an adjoining alfresco terrace, for the main act. Davide Borin rules the roost, directing his team across the kitchen to craft such dishes as the seasonal ***polpo alla luciana*** slow-cooked octopus tentacle in cherry tomato sauce, ***abbacchio e polenta*** braised Australian lamb shank with creamy Parmesan polenta, ***guancia di manzo brasata*** braised beef cheek in bone-marrow jus with black-truffle mashed potatoes, classic ***vitello tonnato*** chilled veal roast with quail eggs and a sauce made with tuna and capers—the list goes on. Plus, Essenza’s front-of-house team *will* go the extra mile to ensure no one walks out of the restaurant without refrains of having dined to repletion.



Rawya.

Rawya, the Euro-Asian *brasserie*, takes a more diverse route. Inspired by the Silk Road, the stories told here through the art of gastronomy honours the amalgamation of flavours, cultures, knowledge, and traditions exchanged on this

historical trading passage. Arabic dishes, Asian specialities, and Mediterranean classics feature on the menu, from **beef *mashakeek***, **Singaporean laksa**, ***gambas pil pil***, and herb ***pide*** flatbread to **Omani whole lobster**, ***sheri singari*** roasted fish, and ***joojeh kabob*** marinated chicken skewers.



Sawa Lounge.

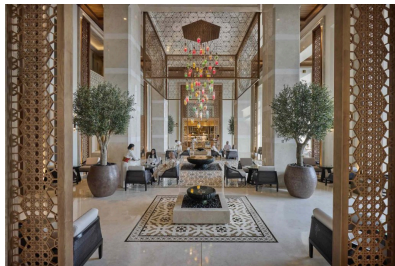
Sawa Lounge in the refined hotel lobby is a social spot for afternoon tea, with the whimsical, palm-shaped tiered stand stealing the show, proffering bites of **mixed berry pavlovas**, **blueberry tarts**, **blackberry brownies**, **strawberry bourbons**, ***shuwa* tacos**, ***arancini di bosco***, **scones** with clotted cream and raspberry and rose-water jam and date paste, and more on outstretched platforms. Pick a tea blend from the Mandarin Oriental selection and have it prepared table-side. For even more sweets, head to the Mandarin Oriental Cake Shop, also in the lobby, for a spread of signature desserts, pastries, and cakes to take home.

Executive lounge

TwoThree58 Club, exclusive to club room and suite guests, provides an additional dining option that comes with a substantial terrace overlooking the sea and hotel pool deck.

**Do you want to spend Friday night in the lobby bar?**

Well, it's not in the lobby, but we'd like to spend Friday night at the Essenza bar anyway. Live music, a selection of antipasti dishes and *cicchetti* snacks, handcrafted cocktails and mocktails, and a robust wine and spirits collection will fuel guests pre- and post-dinner.



Mandarin Oriental, Muscat lobby.

**Would you buy the hotel if you could?**

It's a yes from us. Considering the rising interest in Oman as a travel and leisure destination, this purchasing decision could prove a lucrative move. Not only is the Mandarin Oriental, Muscat ideally positioned as a starting point for engaging with the cultural, artistic, historical, and architectural sensations of the city, it also offers opportunities for

guests to dive into Oman's vibrant landscapes, from sand dunes to reef-studded coastlines and grand mountains. Pair that with exceptional MO service and hotel experiences and we're sold.

**Score:** 8.5

**What Our Score Means:**

**1-3:** Fire your travel agent if they suggest you stay here.

**4-6:** Solid if you're in a pinch —but only if you're in a pinch.

**7-8:** Very good. We'd stay here again and recommend it without qualms.

**9-10:** Forget booking a week. When can we move in permanently?

*All images courtesy of Mandarin Oriental, Muscat.*

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