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On the Cover
In a villa overlooking the Table Mountain in Oman’s Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort. Produced by Anwesha Sanyal Photographed by Ashish Chawla Fashion Editor Rishu Raj Model: India Woods wearing a cruise multi-slit polka maxi, Guapa Resort Wear, ₹1,2500; blue dori belt, Anita Dongre, ₹1,800; art deco light-blue earrings, Purab Paschim by Ankit Khullar, ₹7,000; bracelet, Kate Spade New York, ₹5,640.
At the edge of the Green Mountain overlooking the canyon.

Handkerchief top gown with flower detail. Gauri & Nainika, $130,000; wooden bangle with black onyx. Amethyst by Rahul Popli, $3,450; metallic block heels. Chalk Studio X Siddartha Tytler, $7,900.
Playing Between the Shadows

There is a certain intimacy with the skies when you are 2,000 metres above sea level—you’re an accomplice as well as a spectator. As the morning light wakes up the perennial canyon and the rugged valleys, only to lull them to sleep in the evening, Anwesha Sanyal stands at the edge of the Saiq plateau and watches the time-lapse.

Produced by Anwesha Sanyal
Photographs by Ashish Chawla Fashion Editor Rishi Raj
Model India Woods Location Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, Oman
The water feature resembles the irrigation channels of the old Wadi villages. Behind, is the iconic minaret of the hotel.

Barber striped sleeveless top, Kate Spade New York, £155,500; skirt, Fendi, price on request; sunglasses, Ray-Ban (at Sunglass Hut), £8,080; Martina wedges, Chalk Studio, £1,200; small ‘Dony’ bag, Kate Spade New York, £14,000; wrist watch, Michael Kors, £20,495.
If large sand
dunes or lone palm trees ever
east shadows in the Middle East, they go
unnoticed. As humans, we do not
fancy spending time in silhouettes, especially when we travel. Instead,
our eyes follow what is easily visible, whether on the map, in the guide
book, or popular opinion. I’d already been to the Middle East a couple of
times when Oman happened. This time, with an eye on overcoming the
vastness of the arid landscape I wanted to focus on the tinier details, and
in not being overwhelmed by that which is apparent, maybe a local secret
would reveal itself to a foreigner.

I had only strapped myself in a luxury SUV and bent the corner off
the Muscat airport to the highway, when the brown, jagged mountains of
Oman hit me: It was as if the summer sun had bleached the surroundings
of all its color and left every rock exposed,
the panorama looking like the insides of a sand globe, of which I was now
a part. Local secrets, here?

I arrived at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort two square hours later,
humming lines from Hotel California, “You can check-out anytime you like,
but you can never leave.” Though, one wouldn’t need to halt at the front
porch for that feeling to set in: the video on their website quite does the job
when you book your stay—sitting at a height of 2,600 meters at the edge of
the Saiq Plateau, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar looks out to the gargantuan
canyon of the Green Mountain—this is where you’d be if you wanted to
buy a spot at the end of the world.

My previous visit to an Anantara hotel was also my first ever; I was
at Kalutara, Sri Lanka six months back, sitting on a row boat with the
Fishing Guru for a good catch at five in the morning. I hadn’t caught any
fish that day but been acquainted with Anantara’s flair for moulding itself
completely into the fabric of the region it is in. At first glance, the hotel
is exactly what you want it to be: somewhere to plot your disappearing act
at the end of a hectic week; some place to enter like a sand castle may enter
the quicksand and not offer any explanation before it melted away.

Inside, the hotel mirrors an old Wadi village, virtually inverting
every lack of luxury in its surrounding area with plush villas, fine diners,
and spots furnished to allow the best vantage points to the canyon.
The property covers several acres on the ground, without rising much
vertically: one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas are separated by lanes
which mimic the ‘alleys’ carved between houses in the Omani villages, or
lean water features, an extension of the deep dug channels that the Wadi
tribe used for water irrigation. “Beautiful to look at but dangerous for
heels,” Jesse, the assistant marketing manager at the resort had said, “We
had to put grills in so people wouldn’t fall into them.”

Lotfi Sidirahal, founder of Atelier Pod, and architect who designed
the hotel, has deployed dark, vertical bars, sometimes Arabian motifs on
windows—as camouflaged time keepers. At different points in the day,
these patterns draw shadows on
the ground or the building, almost
anticipating your movement around
the property—at six on the stairs of
your villa when you descend to catch
the first rays of the sun, at nine
on the first-floor corridor that leads
you to the Al Maison restaurant for
breakfast, at half past three when
the shadows escape the property
momentarily to cast a ritualistic
outline over the canyon, and at five
when the orange sun filters through
the clouds to signal the end of the day
at Diana’s Point—time is not only
slow, it orchestrates itself to suit you.

In mirroring the Omani lifestyle,
what seeps through Anantara is the
silence that permeates the three
abandoned villages just five kilometres
from the hotel. For over 40 years, these
villages have been deserted by the
Wadi people due to their inaccessible
location. While they moved on to
find greener pastures elsewhere,
wherever a tycoon in the Middle
East dreamt of a hotel that would draw
luxury travellers for this very reason.
Here, there’s the luxury of distraction
in the quietness, with only the sound
of the wind, perhaps a guest walking in
the distance, or the water rumbling off
the channels keeping you company.

At once you know, why this is the
country’s newfound secret—a tiny dot
juxtaposed against the large canyon you
found in the guide book, only revealing
itself when you seek it out. Just like the
shadows under the vertical beams or
life beyond the dry rocks in the desert,
this spot is saved from everything the
sun seemed to have parched.
The first-floor corridor leading to Al Maison restaurant reflects the Arabian motifs from the wall.

Kitsch steampunk georgette shirt, Nida Mahmood, €10,030; front pleat detail trousers, Lola by Suman B, €9,000; belt, Armani Exchange, €3,999; silver ring with ruby and single-cut diamonds, Amethyst by Rahul Pande, €21,899; Kylie wedges, Dune, €8,995; EYELIGHT eyewear, Givenchy, €19,400; The Bisonst Bott Blue trunk, The V Renaissance, €185,000.
The Anantara Spa has an indoor pool perfect for a late-night dip.

Surf Bride swimsuit, Roxy, ₹2,795; tile texture stole, Kavita Bhartia, ₹24,800.
The sun falls in patches on an outdoor sofa in the garden pool villa.

No Trouble with Ruffle dress, Lulu & Sky, ₹9,300; sandals, Rosso Brunello, ₹5,299.
The vertical panels make shadows on the walls at six in the morning.

Dégradé striped cady dress, Fendi, ₹1,67,976; ANITA sunglasses, MaxMara, ₹16,400; animal print pattern leather sandals, Woods, ₹3,985; bag, Christian Louboutin X Sabyasachi, ₹1,80,000; wrist watch, Kate Spade New York, ₹13,995.
The signature bar Al Burj on the first floor of the minaret offers premium beverages from around the world.

Cotton-silk shirt with applique, Sahil Kochhar, ₹15,880; leather-cord patola skirt, My Village by Rinzim Daru, ₹53,000; earring, Purab Paschim by Ankit Khullar, ₹6,500; brass cuff with enamel finish, Shivam Narresh X Swarovski for CONFLUENCE, ₹10,500; pumps, Woods, ₹4,995.
Sitting at a height of 2,000 metres at the edge of the Saiq Plateau and looking out to a gargantuan canyon of the Green Mountain, this is what you’d do if you wanted to buy a spot at the end of the world.
GETTING THERE
Oman Air runs direct flights (less than four hours) from major Indian cities to Muscat. From the airport, it takes two hours to reach Anantara Al Jabal Akhdar Resort. The visa (₹23,939) takes about seven days, and the hotel can arrange it for you, too.

STAY
The three-bedroom Royal Mountain Villa is perfect for large families or a group of nine. It comes with a large infinity pool that overlooks the canyon. From ₹13,348 per night. anantara.com

VISIT
Get an immersive walking tour of the nearby area with the Mountain Guru who brings his own childhood memories to life as he takes you through the three abandoned Wadi villages.

INDULGE
The rugged plateau adds a fantastic backdrop to a luxury mountain picnic prepared for you by the hotel. Take their signature hikes and encounter the free-roaming wildlife, hike down fossil staircases, admire cave villages, and swim under a beautiful waterfall.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS
Within the hotel’s iconic Musandam Tower lies two signature offerings. The Al Qalaa restaurant brings secret recipes from Omani kitchens to the fine diner on the ground floor. Above, Al Buri is the Moroccan Lounge bringing a premium collection of beverages.

WHERE TO BUY
Chalk Studio 110-B, Pat Mohan Plaza, 11/56, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi; Christian Louboutin Sir HC Dinshaw Building, 16 Hiranman Cinte, New Delhi; Fendi DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; Jimmy Choo Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; Kate Spade New York DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; Kavita Bhartia Ogaon, DLF Emporio, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; Lulu & Sky luluandsky.com; Michael Kors Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; Mint Blush 34, Fashion Street, Shahpur Jat, New Delhi; October Jaipur octoberjaipur.com; Purab Paschim D-20, Shriwast Puri, Block D, Defence Colony, New Delhi; Rimzim Madh A-72, Sector-2, Noida; Rosso Brunello Orion Mall, Subramanya Nagar, Bengaluru; Roxy Ambience Mall, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi; Sahil Kochhar COLLAGE 21/1, Wood St, Ashok Nagar, Bengaluru; Sunglass Hut Palladium, Phoenix Mills, Mumbai; Swarovski Confluence perriniaspopupshop.com; Tarun Tahiliani 11, Linking Rd, Santacruz West, Mumbai; Vidhi Wadhwani vidhiwadhwani.com; Woodland Inorbit Mall, G-32, Link Road, Malad West, Mumbai; Zarin Jewelry zarin.com