

Jabel Shams adventure camp revamped

Adventure travellers seeking an authentic Omani experience can now use a revamped base camp lying at an altitude of 1,800 m at the foot of Jabal Shams Peak.

Jabel Shams Base Camp (JSBC) overlooking the natural beauty of Jabel Misht, Wadi Ghul and the famous Wadi Nakhr, also called the Grand Canyon of Arabia, was designed with the authentic appeal of a rural-lodge.

The campsite was first established in 2006. Expeditions International-EMC (EI-EMC), a Lebanon based firm specialising in the management of ecotourism projects, took over the site and introduced all necessary refurbishment needed on site to render the visitor's stay as comfortable and authentic as possible. JSBC, which fully re-opened in October 2008, was given a complete face lift including new plumbing and electrical re-wiring plus a refurbished kitchen with new equipment. Inspired by the surrounding context, an Arabian style Majlis was recently mounted.

Visitors are accommodated in 15 Bedouin style lodging units measuring 3m x 3m partially built with stones and the rest covered with a Bedouin tent. Every Unit contains two beds and a private shower/WC with hot water and are mounted with enough space between them to maintain the privacy of the visitors. The Camp also includes six bungalows with air conditioning, private shower/WC and hot water.

On site the restaurant is open all day to cater for guests and walk in visitors.

Other facilities at the campsite include a coffee shop terrace located in a cave overlooking the mountain, adventure and outdoor activities, a mountain rescue unit and a traditional carpet weaving area. Guests can also meet local craftsman and carpet weavers working onsite.

The base camp is suitable for families (plenty of open space for children to play in) as well as couples and those seeking a corporate retreat. Team building activities, tailor made packages for corporate groups, special adventure programmes and specially designed school programmes can also be arranged.

JSBC caters to both domestic and international tourists with a marketing strategy is currently focusing heavily on the GCC market. (Its high location allows for cool weather all year round).

EI-EMC has complete management authority over the base camp. Professional local staff operates the site with backup from a team of professional mountain guides.

The Jabel Shams area is considered as a unique tourism destination in the GCC, and the company believes that responsible tourism will contribute to the conservation of the area, its natural and cultural resources and can ensure economic benefits to the local community.

The Grand Canyon of Arabia constitutes the main attraction where the Ministry of Tourism has developed well maintained trekking and hiking paths. Other attractions are the Via Ferrata that overlooks the Grand Canyon with an abseil of 200 metres; the Balcony walk overlooking Wadi Nakhr and leading to the abandoned village of Sab Bani Khamis (a village sheltered inside small caves and partially built in stones), and the Descent Walk that flows down the canyon to reach to the historic village of Wadi Ghul.