

# The American International School of Muscat



## New Staff Handbook

Welcome to the TAISM staff! We are excited to have you as a part of our diverse and energetic faculty. We know that moving to a new country and school creates many questions, whether this is your first move overseas or your tenth. We look forward to meeting you or communicating with you via email in the near future. It is our hope that the following information will provide some answers to your basic questions. We'll see you soon!

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# VISA PROCESSING

## **Items TAISM will need to process your work visa:**

- 1) Police clearance: This is issued by your local police station certifying that you have no criminal records. It may be difficult to get a police clearance in a country outside of the USA or Canada. If you are already living abroad, you can get a letter from the Regional Security Officer at the US Embassy in the country where you reside.

For Canadians living abroad, you might need to obtain a police clearance letter from the RCMP office in Ottawa. You need to take a paper from the RCMP to a local police authority for your fingerprints, and then send that form to Ottawa. The clearance letter may take some time; start early.

If you have a question concerning the procedure for obtaining a police clearance, please contact Kevin Schafer, TAISM Director, or Hemant Dutia, TAISM Business Manager.

- 2) A photocopy of your passport as well as your dependents' passports. The page(s) copied should clearly show passport number, your picture, name, permanent address or place of birth, date of issue, date of expiry, and place of issue. At the minimum, the passport must be valid until February 15 of the coming year (February 15, 2021). \*Passport holders with less than six months before their passports expire may not be admitted into the country.
- 3) Photocopy of your educational certificates, including diplomas and official transcripts indicating degrees/diplomas earned. Also, please send a copy of your teaching licence. If your educational degree is from a country other than the US, you need to get this degree certificate attested first by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then by the Omani Embassy in the country you are leaving. Only the bachelor's degree master's degree certificates need to be attested. If you have both degrees, only the master's degree needs to be attested. There is no need to get a transcript or teaching license attested.
- 4) A photograph of you (passport style) with any color background. You can send this as a jpeg attachment and we will print copies to use on your visa application, etc.
- 5) Permanent address and mailing address if different from permanent address.
- 6) For married couples, a photocopy of your marriage certificate is required. If you were married in the USA or Canada, we will get the copy attested at the US Embassy, Muscat. If you were married outside the USA, a copy of the marriage certificate must be attested first by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then by the Omani Embassy in the country where you were married. If your marriage certificate has already been apostilled, attestation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Omani Embassy is not required.

- 7) Other information needed: The Ministry of Education in Oman requires a form with personal details to be completed by all new teachers. A blank form will be uploaded by Hemant Dutia in your folder on the school drive as clarified in item (8) below.
- 8) Please note that an email account will be created for you by the IT Department of TAISM, as soon as you are hired and have signed an employment agreement. Your email address will give you access to a folder on the school's Google Drive where you are requested to upload all documents requested in this document. All documents need to be good, clear copies. Please do not send documents as an email attachment.
- 9) The visa process takes about three months to complete. Ideally, we would like to send you copies of your visas before June 1. A copy is sent to you, and the original visa will be waiting for you to collect from the visa officials when you arrive in the immigration area at the Muscat airport. You will need to show a printed copy of your visa to pass through immigration and customs. The school's Public Relations Officer, Mr. Nasser Al Ghabshi, will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall with a sign indicating your name(s).
- 10) Please keep receipts for any costs incurred in completing the process listed above (except costs for passports) and the school will reimburse you for the costs once you are in Muscat.  
  
\*\* Please note: There are certain medical conditions (e.g., communicable diseases) that may be cause for the government of Oman to disallow a work visa. For more information on this, please contact Kevin or Hemant.
- 11) We need your driver's license copy. The driver's license should be issued on or before August 1 of the previous year (August 1, 2019). If your license has been renewed within the last 12 months before you arrive, we shall need a copy of the previous license (original, if available) or alternatively, a certificate from your local licensing authority stating that you have been holding a driver's license for more than one year. This driving license or certificate allows you to obtain an Omani driver's license.

**Other information needed by the school prior to starting work in August:**

## **Physical Examination**

Each new teacher is required to receive a physical examination prior to the start of teaching at the school.

If you are able to have the Physical Examination (form will be uploaded in the Google drive) covered in full by your current insurance company, then we encourage you to complete the process prior to leaving your home-of-record. Otherwise, if you are not covered for a full physical (as described on our form) under your present insurance company, we ask that you

wait until you are in Muscat to have the Physical Examination completed. We will make arrangements with a private hospital in Muscat to administer a full physical examination once you have arrived in Oman, and this will be covered by the school insurance.

**If you will be waiting until you arrive in Muscat to have your physical exam completed, the only tests that we require you to have administered prior to your departure from your home-of-record are for HIV and TB.** The reasons for these tests being completed prior to your arrival in Oman is that a “HIV positive” or “TB positive” result would preclude you from acquiring a resident card in Oman, thus canceling your work visa.

Please check with your local health authorities on how the HIV and TB tests can be administered. Once you have these tests completed, scan and upload the reports to the Google drive with all other documents. Please bring the receipts for costs to claim reimbursement when you arrive in Muscat. The test results remain confidential. If you have any questions regarding this procedure, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Dutia or Mr. Schafer.

\*Important note: After you arrive in Muscat in August, you will still need to go through a mandatory health check again at a government-approved clinic in Muscat even though you have completed the above health requirements. The reason for this is that HIV is one of two health conditions that are monitored each time you apply for a resident card in Oman (this is required to be done every two years). The other test is for TB, and the clinic will be taking a x-ray for this test. We will assist all new staff in doing this during our first week together.

## Required Materials to Submit

- ❖ Checklist of things to be uploaded to a folder on the school’s Google Drive for visa processing by TAISM’s Business Office **BEFORE MARCH 1 (or as soon as possible after receiving your contract):**
  - Police clearance
  - Photocopies of passports for all family members
  - Photocopies of educational certificates, transcripts and teaching license.
  - Passport size: 5 cm x 3.5 cm photograph with any color background
  - Permanent address
  - Photocopy of marriage certificate
  - Parents’ names for you and all dependents, religion, countries visited in past six months
  - Physical examination form or HIV and TB results (as clarified on page 4 under “Physical Examination”)
  - Ministry of Education form with applicant’s personal details
  - Copy of your driver’s license

- ❖ Checklist of things to send **AFTER JULY 1:**
  - Veterinarian's authorization of pet's health, if applicable. See information on "Pets" below.
  - Current Mailing Address**
    - Please send your mailing address to Hemant Dutia, [dutiah@taism.com](mailto:dutiah@taism.com). It is important to indicate a street address (not post office box), in case we need to send a DHL or FedEx shipment.

## Application Process for Enrolling Your Children at TAISM

If you have school-aged children who will be attending TAISM, please visit the school's website, <https://www.taism.com/admissions/inquiry>, and look for Admissions Procedures. You will find links to all the documents we will require to begin the admissions process.

Please contact the Admissions Coordinator at [seymouru@taism.com](mailto:seymouru@taism.com) if you have any questions.

## Pets

The Omani government allows pets to be brought in from other countries. A veterinarian will need to verify the health of your pet in your home country. Please inform Hemant Dutia if you are bringing a pet with you. A form to be completed for this (if requested by you) may be found in the Google drive shared with you. Once you have completed the necessary documentation, please scan and upload the completed form in the Google drive. You will need to complete this after July 5 to meet Oman's documentation guidelines. The Business Office staff will apply for permission for your pet's arrival in Oman. Once the permission is issued, animals must arrive in the country within a month. So application for this permission will be done in July or early August depending on the date of your arrival. A scan of the permission will be uploaded in the Google drive. Print this permission and bring it with you. You are responsible for all costs incurred, and the amount owed will be deducted from your first paycheck in August.

Pet food and supplies are available in Oman. There are three or four brands of premium grade dog and cat food along with other brands. Dog food is more expensive than what it would cost in the U.S. There are veterinary services in Oman with reputable services. If you have specific questions about pets, please let someone know and we will put you in touch with a pet owner on staff. While we understand that pets become members of your family, getting a pet into the country (especially with the extreme heat of summer) and finding adequate care for it while you are away from Muscat can be difficult. We are not advising against bringing a pet, but want you to be aware of the costs and procedures involved. If you are planning to transport your pet with you, please be knowledgeable of airline guidelines and procedures.

## Shipping

As mentioned in your contract, the school provides you with a cash allowance for shipping costs which does not require you to submit receipts. This way, you are free to choose your own method of shipping (air freight/sea container). Think carefully (or email your "host") about what you want to ship. Almost everything you need is available in Oman. At the same time, people, especially families, will often ship their present belongings instead of purchasing all new furnishings, clothing, etc. **Options for how to use your shipping allowance include: sending a shipment (boat transport or air freight), paying for additional luggage or purchasing new items instead.**

If you are looking for a recommendation from the school regarding shippers (boat transport), new staff in the past have used the following two companies which have been competitive in terms of rates and service. Once you contact them, they will quote you and if you approve the quote, they will put you in touch with their agent in the U.S. This is a recommendation only, and you are free to use any other company if rates quoted are competitive for you.

- (1) Blue Eagle Logistics LLC  
P. O. Box 19, Muttrah  
Postal Code 114  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Tel: (968) 9910-6859 / (968) 2478-0771/2478-0772 ext. 200  
Fax: (968) 2478-0772  
Contact person: Mr. Saurabh Pare, email: [s.pare@kr.om](mailto:s.pare@kr.om)
  
- (2) ISS Worldwide Movers  
(a division of Inchcape Shipping Services)  
Packing and Removals  
P.O. Box 36, Ruwi  
Postal Code 112  
Sultanate of Oman  
Tel : (968) 2459-0198 / (968) 2459-0539  
Mobile: (968) 9923-0503  
Fax: (968) 2459-0329  
Contact person: Mr. Manoj Kumar  
E-mail: [Manoj.kumar@iss-shipping.com](mailto:Manoj.kumar@iss-shipping.com)  
Website: [www.iss-shipping.com](http://www.iss-shipping.com)

**Important note:** If you are sending your shipment to arrive in Muscat before your arrival date, please send it in the name of:

Kevin Schafer, Director  
The American International School of Muscat  
P.O. Box 584, Azaiba  
Postal Code 130  
Sultanate of Oman  
Tel: (968) 2459-5180

\*Your own mailing address will be the same as above (TAISM's school address), substituting your name for Mr. Schafer's name. If your shipment is arriving in Muscat after your arrival date, you can send the shipment in your name. Even if you live off campus, your mail and shipments will be sent to the school which will be the most reliable way to ensure they reach you.

When completing your documents with your shipping company, please indicate the following agent for clearing the shipment in Muscat (customs, receipt of shipment at the port). It is best to make certain that the cost you agree upon with your shipping company includes customs clearance and to-door service in Muscat, and that it states this clearly on the document you receive. The contents of your consignment should be described as "personal effects".

Please note that the school will receive the shipment and keep it in a safe indoor place on campus until you arrive. It is your responsibility to take the items from campus to the assigned housing unit. If the shipment arrives after you are in Muscat, we will ask the agent to deliver it directly to your housing unit. Since there are limitations to storing large items, it is recommended that, if you plan sending large items (e.g. large furniture) you schedule the delivery after your arrival to Muscat.

Note: Another important aspect to check is if you are booking a full container or if you are booking a LCL shipment (LCL means your cargo is part of a container with other people's goods). The LCL shipment takes a minimum of one month to clear in Oman as per the ministry procedures here. We do not recommend a LCL shipment, but if you do this, please add one month to the shipping time given by the agent for clearing.

Please use one of the following as your clearing agent (if you have a choice use #1)

- (1) ISS Worldwide Movers  
(a division of Inchcape Shipping Services)  
Packing and Removals  
P.O. Box 36, Ruwi  
Postal Code 112  
Sultanate of Oman  
Tel : (968) 2459-0198 / (968) 2459-0539  
Mobile: (968) 9923-0503  
Fax: (968) 2459-0329  
Contact person: Mr. Richard Fredrick  
E-mail: [richard.f@iss-shipping.com](mailto:richard.f@iss-shipping.com)  
Website: [www.iss-shipping.com](http://www.iss-shipping.com)
  
- (2) Writer Relocations  
P.O. Box 3380, Postal Code 111  
Warehouse No. 16, Plot 125, Building 2066  
Ghala Industrial Area, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Contact person: Mr. Satish Nelson  
Email: [satish.nelson@writercorporation.com](mailto:satish.nelson@writercorporation.com)  
Website: [www.writercorporation.com](http://www.writercorporation.com)

### *Materials Clearing Customs*

Any shipment, whether it be boxes or a full container, may be opened by the customs officials. Therefore, if you have trunks with locks, please make sure to send the keys to the school ahead of time. Books, CDs and DVDs may be held for review by the customs authorities. This doesn't always happen, but you may want to consider packing these items separately to avoid delays in your entire shipment. Concerning books, CDs and videos, the authorities are "censors" and are looking for illegal things such as sexually explicit material or content that would be offensive to the Islamic faith.

### *Air Freight*

If you aren't sending a large shipment, you may want to consider sending items via DHL or UPS. Items sent with this method typically arrive within a week. Do not send goods via US Postal Service as we have found the connection between the US Postal Service and Oman Postal Service to be unreliable.

If you are shipping essential professional items that you will need for your classroom, please first check with your Principal to see if these items can be acquired in Muscat. If not, any additional shipment would need to be pre-approved by your administrator.

### *Excess Baggage*

Another option to transport goods to your new home is to pay for excess baggage and bring important items that you will need right away with you on the plane. When bringing luggage with you to Muscat, you may be charged for excess baggage (per kilo) if you change airlines at some point in your trip. Check before you leave as to how much weight/volume each airline you are flying with (KLM, BA, Oman Air, Gulf Air, etc.) allows for each part of your journey. You could also send bags as unaccompanied freight. Check with your local airport, as costs and regulations vary by country and airline.

*Special Note: If you are planning on taking a layover in Europe on your way to Oman, please note that when you continue your journey from Europe to Oman, the European baggage restrictions are in effect. These allow much less weight than when traveling directly from the US or Canada to Oman. For some airlines (and please check to be sure), you are allowed two pieces of luggage per passenger, weighing no more than 50 pounds each when traveling to or from North America. When traveling from anywhere else in the world, you are only allowed a total of 50 pounds per person, total, for ALL of your checked luggage. For this reason, make sure your bags are checked all the way through to Muscat (MCT) when you check-in in North America. If they have to retag your luggage in Europe, you will also get charged. Please ensure that you follow the latest baggage rules as noted on the website of the airline you are traveling on.*

### **Initial Travel to Oman**

The school will arrange one-way economy class plane tickets from your Home of Record (listed on your contract) to Muscat for you and your dependents so that you will arrive with enough time (typically one or two days) to take care of necessary procedures before the New Staff Inservice activities begin. After your first year of service, the school will purchase

round-trip tickets to your home of record. Hemant Dutia will be the contact person for flight arrangements.

## **When you arrive in Oman...**

Even if you arrive late at night, it will be very warm (dressing in layers is always good with cool airplanes/airports and hot outdoors/shuttle buses).

*After exiting the airplane and entering the terminal building, Mr. Nasser Al Ghabshi, the school's Public Relations Officer (PRO), will meet you and take you through the immigration counter. The immigration officer will check your passport and visa copy that you have, and will put a stamp with a two-year visa in your passport. If for some reason, the school was not able to get your visa, Hemant Dutia will inform you accordingly. In this case, you will need to go to the same counter to purchase a one-month tourist visa. This is currently RO 20, but you can pay for it in US dollars, credit card, or other foreign currency as well. Save your receipt as TAISM will reimburse you. When this happens, the school will sort it out later and acquire your proper work visa in the next few days.*

After going through immigration, collecting your bags, and clearing customs, you will enter the waiting area where a member of the TAISM administration will be waiting for you. There are typically a large number of people in the waiting area. Proceed through the gated areas where we will be waiting for you. If, for some reason, you do not find us right away, find an out-of-the-way spot to wait and we will find you.

ATMs and a currency exchange are available at the airport and you will be able to stop and acquire or change money. However, you won't need any money that night and someone will be glad to take you to an ATM or bank the next day. There are ATM machines that will accept your debit card from your checking account in the States (Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, etc.). If you bring cash or travelers checks, someone will take you to a bank to change them at another time.

Once you have met your Administration greeters, you will be transported to your new accommodations. There you will find your furnished housing along with some staples for the next few days, a rental car (provided by the school for the first two weeks), and a temporary cellular phone. Once you've been shown around, we'll leave you to settle in and also get some rest.

## **Settling In Once you are here...**

There are several things you will need to do and know after arriving in Oman. Our Public Relations Officer (P.R.O.) and/or Hemant Dutia, Business Manager, will assist you during New Teacher Orientation with items 1-5.

1. **Visa medical check including HIV blood test** – All new staff will go to a clinic to get a blood sample taken. All paperwork and procedures will be managed by the Public

Relations Officer (P.R.O.). \*This test is in addition to the HIV test you have already taken for your physical and is required every two years by the Omani government.

2. **Acquiring your resident card** – This certifies that you have a sponsor (TAISM) that will provide your income while in Oman. You will go for this with the school P.R.O., but it's something that needs to be taken care of right away.

Once we've determined when everyone will arrive, Hemant Dutia will send you a schedule of when you will complete all of these items. Every attempt will be made to finish these before inservice days begin. We will provide daycare for those families that have not hired a nanny.

In addition to the above official obligations, you will want to complete as many of the tasks shown below as soon as possible.

3. **Acquiring your driver's license** – In order to own a car in Oman, you must have a valid Omani driver's license. For most Western country citizens, no test is involved in obtaining this license if you can show a current license from your home country. The Public Relations Officer will bring all new staff to the licensing center to acquire their licenses. He will process all the paperwork for you after he receives copies of your present license.

**\*If you have renewed your license within the last year, bring an expired license or a copy of the license that proves you have driving experience.**

If your licence shows class (A, B, C, etc.) and does not clarify that you are entitled to drive a light motor vehicle, it would be better to get a certificate from a local licensing authority to clarify this. Please send a copy of your driver's license(s) and the certificate as mentioned above with the documents you send to the school.  
\*\*Alternatively, you can purchase an International Driver's License at AAA in the U.S. for a nominal fee. This license can be used in Oman in lieu of the Omani driver's license.

4. **Banking** - Banks in Oman are only open in the mornings, usually from 8:00-2:00, Sunday through Thursday. The Business Office will assist all new staff in setting up their accounts during New Staff Orientation. If you're bringing money from the States (or elsewhere), bring cash, or you may wire money to the school account and we will give this money to you when you arrive in August. Please write to Hemant Dutia if you plan to use this method of bringing in your money. Otherwise, use a debit card to withdraw Omani Rials from an ATM in Oman.

- You can withdraw up to RO 600 = US \$1554 per day from an ATM.
- The Omani Rial is tied to the American dollar, so the exchange rate is always 1 Rial = US \$2.60.
- Payday is the last working Thursday of each month, and you will receive your first paycheck at the end of August. All contracted employees are paid by direct deposit to a bank account in Oman.

5. **Acquiring a Liquor License (*optional*)** – To buy liquor in Oman, you need a license. You will need a letter from TAISM, stating your monthly salary, because you are only allowed a license of up to 10% of your salary per month (you can get less). Cost is 60% of the amount of your monthly allotment, and two passport pictures are required. (See further information on liquor on page 17.)

The following items are things you will need to arrange on your own once you arrive. Staff will be glad to support you and give you advice on how to proceed, but the responsibility lies with the employee.

6. Purchase or Renting Vehicles – A typical practice for obtaining transportation is to rent a car for the first month in Oman, while looking for one to buy. As mentioned above, the school will provide a suitably sized rental car, free of charge, for the first two weeks. Continuing to rent costs around RO 170, or about US \$450 per month and includes insurance. While renting, you may use your valid US or Canadian driver's license. There are many used vehicles for sale by owners. Most often they are advertised on various bulletin boards at grocery stores and in malls, as well online, but it takes time and effort to find them. Cars and four-wheel-drive vehicles are generally the same price or cheaper than in the US. You can get a loan through the finance company to help finance it.
7. Hire a nanny or maid (household help) – Most home help staff are expatriates from India, the Philippines, or Sri Lanka. There is housing available for maids of staff living on campus. Off-campus staff will be responsible for the housing of household help they employ. Staff who employ household help, such as a maid, are responsible for their visa, medical and life insurance, which is approximately RO 425 annually. Salaries for home help staff is arranged between the staff member and employee. When arranging for the employment of home help, the school's P.R.O. will assist with the paperwork. It is not recommended that you hire a nanny "over the internet" as it's very important to feel a rapport with the person taking care of your children. It may be possible to obtain a recommendation from teachers who are moving away from TAISM whose housemaids/nannies are looking for a new family to work for.
8. Enroll your children at TAISM – Staff who have school-age children that plan to attend TAISM will need to provide the necessary paperwork for admissions. This includes school records for the previous two years, health and immunization records, one passport photo, passport and birth certificate copies, and a physical. You can have the physical completed in Oman or in your home country. Please contact Urmila Seymour, our school's Admissions Coordinator, at [seymouru@taism.com](mailto:seymouru@taism.com) to obtain the proper forms or find them online at [www.taism.com](http://www.taism.com).

# General Information

## Housing

The school maintains 11 on-campus housing units (1 four-bedroom unit, 8 three-bedroom units for couples and families, and 2 one-bedroom units for singles). Off-campus housing includes a variety of apartments and houses to house our families, couples and singles. Currently, all off-campus housing is located within a five-minute walk or a ten-minute drive from school.

All housing generally has a living and dining area, a full kitchen (gas stove/oven, refrigerator, microwave, clothes washing machine, and water cooler are provided), and the number of bedrooms that will fit your family size comfortably. The houses are also fitted with a phone line and internet service.

The school provides most hard furnishings and bedding needed for you/your family. If you wish to purchase additional furniture, it is readily available in nearby stores (IKEA is now shipping to Oman from the UAE beginning in Summer of 2019). The voltage in Oman is 220 volts, so many appliances from Canada and the US will not be able to handle the higher voltage. If you plan to bring your computer, please check to make sure that it can handle 220 volts. Some items you may want to purchase in Oman are: a clothes dryer (although clothes dry very quickly when hung outside), TV, DVD player, computer, stereo, etc. You can usually purchase any of these items second-hand by checking the bulletin boards around Muscat, or buying them new at prices comparable to North America and Europe. In addition, there are Facebook Groups (Mojo Facebook and The Eagle's Nest - Muscat) where many people sell second-hand items.

In order to assist you with your supply needs prior to the arrival of your shipment or before you can make local purchases, the school provides a **New Staff Welcome Kit** for each housing unit. The Welcome Kit includes dishes, bed sheets, towels, utensils, etc. A list is included with the kit (the items have been set up in your house). In addition, basic grocery provisions will be in the refrigerator and cupboard for you free of charge. When your shipment arrives or when you acquire your own goods, please return the Welcome Kit materials to school. This should be no later than October 15 or within two months from your arrival date.

## Babies and Young Children

Oman is a welcoming culture and people genuinely like children. Don't be surprised when locals reach out to touch your child on the hand or cheek, or want to say hello. Some may want to take pictures, especially of babies and young children. While this may come across as inappropriate or uncomfortable to you, know that it is acceptable and well meant here.

Nannies do a great job getting together for playgroup during the week for the children who are not yet attending school, and there are many local parks, as well as the school/housing playgrounds that your young children will enjoy. There are also mothers and children groups organized by one of the expatriate women organizations. One such group is Muscat Mums

on Facebook. They offer playgroups as well as holiday parties, and their Facebook page is a great place to get information from local moms and to buy/sell supplies.

There is good health and dental care available in Muscat through Muscat Private Hospital as well as other medical providers. Vaccination schedules and well-baby/children check-ups are different than in the US, so ask another staff mom for further information. There are prenatal classes as well as postnatal support. Having a baby in Oman is safe and the care is very good. Doctors are well trained and hospitals have modern medical equipment.

Infant formula, diapers, bottles and other such items are available through the supermarkets as well as some pharmacies. However, items can be much more expensive than in the US, hard to find, or not brands you are familiar with. Items recommended to bring with you (especially if you like certain brands) by moms here are:

- Topical creams like Hydrocortisone and Triple Antibiotic
- Over-the-counter fever and cough medications
- EPI pens
- Vitamins/supplements
- Any specialized or organic brands of soaps, shampoos or lotions for your child(ren)

Clothing and toy shopping for your baby or young child is also available at well known stores such as Borders, Toys R Us, Marks and Spencer, Gymboree, GAP, Carters, and H&M. There are also many local stores that sell fun toys, children's furniture and clothing. However, these items can be expensive so many families opt to bring year-long clothing supplies.

### **Older Children**

There are wonderful opportunities for children in Oman from camping on deserted beaches, to sand-boarding in the dunes, to snorkelling in crystal clear water, to soccer clubs, to a climbing wall, to ballet class and even yoga for children. TAISM offers after school activities for all of its students. There are bowling alleys, cinemas, go karting, paintball organizers, ceramic painting opportunities, water sports and much more.

There are many malls in Oman. Familiar stores available for older children and teens include Forever 21, GAP, and H&M. There are also non-US chains that offer fashionable clothing.

A suggestion for older children is to bring clothes and shoes with them for the first few months or the entire school year. Many families also bring toys, electronics, and other favorite items to last them throughout the school year. As with babies and young children, while items are available here, they can be more expensive or harder to find.

Your division principal will be glad to answer any of your questions or will connect you with a colleague who has children your age.

### **Grocery Shopping and Personal Items**

Muscat has almost everything you would enjoy at home, although brand names may be different. If you want to buy American products, you may find grocery shopping a little more expensive than in the US or Canada. However, there are many alternatives and great fresh produce and fish markets as well. There are good pharmacies. There are more and more organic and gluten-free/vegan food items available in the local supermarkets. The key thing to remember is that some items take a while to restock, so people often buy in bulk if they will be in need. Also, remember that pork is not permitted in Islam, so it's only available in a few specific stores here and quite expensive. Pork is available for lower costs in Dubai, and some staff bring dried/shelf stable pork items (like pepperoni) with them from the U.S.

### **Medications and Pharmacies**

There are many pharmacies in Oman, which will be able to fill prescriptions for you. However, if there are specific medications that you require, you may want to bring a supply of those prescription drugs, as some brands may not be available here. You can email our school nurse or the business manager if you would like to inquire about the availability of certain medications.

### **Household Goods**

You can buy most of the things you'll need for your home in Muscat. Feel free to ask your host or your division principal for any questions you may have about the availability of specific goods.

### **School/Teaching Supplies**

Oman does not have a teacher supply store (e.g., bulletin board cut-outs, stencils, posters, supplemental activities, etc.). However, there are a number of office supply stores in the area. Many of our teachers have found it important to include classroom supplies in their shipments that are essential for them. Most often this includes classroom libraries. However, items such as staplers, paper, tape, pens, etc. are furnished by the school or readily available in the stores. The school provides the essential teaching supplies with grade levels and departments having budgets to make orders for the items they find essential. If you have a question concerning the availability of specific supplies, please contact the Principal.

In your first year, the school provides reimbursement of up to RO 40 (US \$100) for the purchase of supplies you may want in addition to those supplied by the school. Please save your receipts for reimbursement.

### **Dress at School and Everyday Life**

Most staff dress in professional western clothing, observing local customs by not wearing sleeveless shirts (should be at least to the shoulder) or skirts above the knee (although you may notice some outside at nightclubs, etc.). Jeans are not permissible for normal school days. Men wear slacks and shirts (short or long-sleeve), and a few teachers wear ties. Pants and capris are acceptable for women. Shoes are required.

There will be times and places when shorts are appropriate for both men and women outside of school, but this is typically at resorts or in camping areas. Swimming suits can be worn in most areas that westerners frequent.

Weather will be very hot when you arrive in August. Light, natural fabrics (like cotton) are generally coolest. Everything is air conditioned, so you might want to bring some cardigans to throw on indoors. In the winter, temperatures get into the 60s (16°C). You will want sweatshirts and jeans for casual evenings, and maybe even a few sweaters or a light jacket. These also come in handy when travelling to the desert or mountains in the evening. There are several formal events such as the TAISM Ball and the Marine Corps Ball, and although you can purchase formal wear in Muscat, it will be more expensive.

As for children and teens, most staff will recommend you stock up on clothes (even your undergarments) from home to bring to Oman. You can find most things here for your wardrobe but they can be expensive, limited, or brands you might not like. Petite and Plus Size clothing is more limited in supply as well.

### **Time**

Muscat is four hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time. This is nine hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time or eight hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time. Oman does not observe Daylight Savings Time.

### **Hairstylist and Spas**

Muscat has several Western-style full service salons for women with prices comparable to the US. There are also numerous day spas available in Muscat for facials, massage, and nail care. See the [Staff Wellness Resources](#) folder in the google drive for some of the favorite recommendations of TAISM staff.

### **Hospitals, Doctors, and Dentists**

There are a number of private hospitals utilized by expatriates in Oman. Muscat Private Hospital, which is near the school campus, is commonly used by our staff. However, there are numerous hospitals and clinics available, and all are staffed with international and Omani medical staff. All emergency services are provided either at the private hospital or at the Omani government hospitals (which are quite good as well). Oman is rated in the top ten worldwide for healthcare services.

The school's insurance plan covers treatment at all of the hospitals in Oman and abroad. In-patient services at Muscat Private Hospital and other local hospitals and clinics are billed directly to our insurance company. Ambulance services are available within the city limits.

You can get any immunization you may need (to travel to other countries such as Kenya or Tanzania) in Oman, but the clinic is only open during school hours. If you know you will need inoculations, it may be easier to get them at home.

Dentists are available in Muscat at reasonable prices. Dentists are trained internationally, and clinics are staffed with expatriate and local staff.

Again, see the [Staff Wellness Resources](#) folder in the google drive for some of the favorite recommendations of TAISM staff.

### **Newspapers**

There are three daily English language papers published in Oman, as well as newspapers from the United Arab Emirates, the UK and the US. The UK and US papers arrive three or four days later than their publication dates.

### **Guidebooks**

Oman has guidebooks for most of the popular tourist destinations (India, Kenya, Thailand), but if you're planning on visiting a place "off the beaten path", you should bring books from home. Many staff are happy to share their favorite vacation plans and itineraries.

### **Alcohol**

You can purchase a variety of liquors, wines, and beers in Oman with your license. However, the selection is limited and quality ranges greatly. Quality liquors are easy to find and similarly priced to the US, but quality beers and wines can be very pricey. Alcohol is also available for purchase in most hotel restaurants and bars as well as some local restaurants.

### **Safety and Security**

Oman is a very safe country, and the safety of students and staff is extremely important. The TAISM campus security is managed by Badar Al Mamari, Security and Safety Manager. The security staff are available on campus 24 hours a day at Gate 4. We also have regular patrols by the US Embassy security, as well as the Royal Oman Police, to ensure the safety of everyone at our school.

## **Things to Do in Oman**

**Camping** - There are great beaches, amazing desert spots, and majestic mountain areas that are perfect for camping. You will want to bring any camping equipment that you presently own, plus something to put up for a shaded area. Camping equipment can be found in Oman, but it's often expensive and poorly made. In the winter you will want warm clothes for the evenings, and sleeping bags or warm bedding is a necessity.

**Hiking** - Oman has hundreds of beautiful places to explore on foot. Hiking in wadis will require lightweight, fast drying pants (or the kind that zip off into shorts) and water shoes (Teva, Nike, or Champion-type sandals). There are some areas where you can hike in shorts, but you should also have light pants or a wrap-around skirt to cover up when necessary.

**Scuba/Snorkeling** - If you have equipment, bring it! Otherwise, equipment is readily available and scuba classes are offered all the time. You can also find good, used equipment from people leaving Oman.

**Organized Activities** - There are lots of sports leagues in the capital area. However, the equipment for these activities is usually difficult (if not impossible) to find, and it's usually expensive and poor quality. Ice skates and hockey equipment are not available at all.

Activities for children include soccer, t-ball, softball, street hockey (with rollerblades), ice hockey, ice skating, tennis, karate, horseback riding lessons, dance and instrumental music lessons. Adult activities include ice hockey, softball, tennis, basketball, volleyball, soccer, squash, ultimate Frisbee, and choir.

**Shopping** - The souq in old Muscat has traditional silver and handicraft items as well as spices, fabrics, etc. There are many merchants that are willing to barter, while others have "fixed prices". Shopping is very plentiful in the Muscat area. From modern malls to traditional souks, you can find most anything you want. City Center Mall in Seeb includes the stores Gap, Zara, Forever 21, and Home Centre, to name just a few.

**Dining out** - Muscat has plenty of options when choosing a restaurant. The many nationalities living in the capital area provide a wide range of ethnic foods. We have Chinese, Indian, Mexican, Thai, and American (McDonald's, Five Guys, Subway, KFC, Starbucks, Chili's, PF Changs, Pizza Hut, and many more) restaurants as well as the traditional shawarma stands, a Middle Eastern specialty.

**Gyms / Health Clubs** - Most of the area hotels have gyms that you can join. TAISM also has a fitness room which staff are allowed to use after school hours. This is a great alternative when the weather is too warm to work out outside. Many staff have favorite places to go too, so don't hesitate to ask.

**Movies** - Muscat offers several theaters showing recent popular movies (sometimes showing at the same time as in the States, but usually one to two months after US openings). Video and DVD rentals are also available.

**Staff celebrations** - TAISM faculty values a strong sense of community. There are many opportunities for staff to get together on the weekends and during the week. Social committees plan activities that allow staff to get to know each other, as well as our spouses and families.

**Teachers Teaching Teachers (T.T.T.)** – This is a voluntary and free after-school program started several years ago for TAISM faculty, staff, and spouses. You can participate as either a “teacher” or a learner, and in the process you will have a wonderful opportunity to share knowledge and camaraderie with fellow colleagues at TAISM. Some of the great courses we have enjoyed in the recent past are Ultimate Frisbee, Yoga, Geocaching, Fitness Swimming, Morning Running and Workouts, Book Clubs, Camping in Oman, Indian Cooking, Spanish For All, Knitting, Water Babies, Pottery, Beginning Golf, restaurant visits, and many more.

**Places of Worship** - There are Roman Catholic and Protestant churches near the school and other worship opportunities in the community.

**Cultural events** include concerts at the Royal Opera House Muscat, community theatre productions, craft bazaars, National Museum, art galleries, and joining the Muscat Singers (which practices weekly at TAISM).

## **Staff Wellness Resources**

The TAISM Wellness Team has created a [Staff Wellness Resources](#) folder in the google drive where there are additional, local resources in Oman. There are also helpful links to Wellness apps and classroom wellness activities. In addition, the [staff.taism.com](http://staff.taism.com) site has a wealth of information that includes these resources and other helpful handbooks and documents to navigate both your personal and professional wellness needs.

## **TAISM's Child Protection Policy - Summary**

Child abuse and neglect are a violation of a child's human rights and creates obstacles to the student's education, as well as the physical, emotional, and social development of the student.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of students. Schools need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with students over time, are in a unique position to identify students who need help and protection. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify students who are in need of help and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at The American International School of Muscat must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a student has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate employer, to the respective consulate in Muscat, to the appropriate child protection agency in the home country, and/or to local authorities.

The American International School of Muscat endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the host country, Oman, is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. In addition, child protection laws are in the process of being put in place in Oman and will be referenced and referred to as they are developed and as we implement our child protection frameworks and programs.

The Student Protection Team at TAISM consists of counselors and administrators from each division and the director of TAISM. This team ensures that TAISM has an up-to-date and comprehensive, proactive approach to child protection that includes policies and procedures for student protection, screening and criminal background checks, a student protection agreement and an awareness of the responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries, education and training for teachers, students and parents; community partnership resources; and accountability measures.

The American International School of Muscat will distribute Student Protection policy annually to all parents and staff, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children.

## Questions?

If there are questions that are not answered in this booklet, here are the people you can contact:

<u>Questions about</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Email</u>
Visas	Hemant Dutia Business Manager	<a href="mailto:dutiah@taism.com">dutiah@taism.com</a>
Shipping	Hemant Dutia	
Banking/Finances	Hemant Dutia	
Travel Arrangements	Hemant Dutia	
Housing/Furnishings	Mario Perdiguero Facilities Manager	<a href="mailto:perdiguroma@taism.com">perdiguroma@taism.com</a>
Contract	Kevin Schafer Director	<a href="mailto:schaferk@taism.com">schaferk@taism.com</a>
Calendar	Kevin Schafer	
Teaching Assignment	Division Principal	<a href="mailto:petersenr@taism.com">petersenr@taism.com</a> (High School) <a href="mailto:leep@taism.com">leep@taism.com</a> (Middle School) <a href="mailto:leibery@taism.com">leibery@taism.com</a> (Elementary School)
Curriculum Details	Kerry Harder Curriculum Director	<a href="mailto:harderk@taism.com">harderk@taism.com</a>
Admissions	Urmila Seymour Admissions Coordinator	<a href="mailto:seymouru@taism.com">seymouru@taism.com</a>
New Staff Orientation Coordinator	Chrystal Kelly High School Counselor	<a href="mailto:kellyc@taism.com">kellyc@taism.com</a>
New Staff Handbook		