



## Inter-Emirates Weekend 2025

Ayla Hotel, Bawadi Mall, Al Ain, UAE  
Friday-Sunday February 21-23

*Welcome to the Inter-Emirates Weekend 2025. We look forward to welcoming you in Al Ain!  
Below please find information regarding our activities.*

*Please book-mark this page so that you can return frequently as we will be updating  
information, such as trip descriptions, regularly.*

For any enquiries, please write to [interemiratesweekend@gmail.com](mailto:interemiratesweekend@gmail.com)

### Hotel & Booking Information

We are delighted to update that our venue for the Inter-Emirates Weekend will be the Ayla Hotel at Bawadi Mall. We have been quoted an excellent rate (please see below). To book a room, you can use **WhatsApp on this business account: +971 55 908 2250**.

Please use the event code 'ENHG Al Ain'.

You can also use the following numbers for assistance:

Mr. Medhat Birak: 055 1067666

Mr. George Botros: 055 9082250



Hotel Location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/eR6BaiaSqn5xamTe8>

Hotel	Daily Room Rate (Single Breakfast)	Daily Room Rate (Double Breakfast)	Location
Ayla Bawadi Hotel 4* Classic Room	AED 250.00 NET	AED 290.00 NET	<a href="#">Here</a>

### Dinner Invitation

Please join us for dinner on **Saturday, February 22nd at 18:30** at the Ayla Hotel Bawadi Mall, Mezyad Ballroom. Dinner will cost AED100.

Please use this form to reserve your place for dinner by no later than Monday, February 17th: [Dinner Reservation Sign-Up Form](#)

## Breakfast/Lunch Boxes

For trips that leave early, breakfast boxes are available to be ordered from the hotel. This should be at no extra cost if you have booked a room with breakfast as per our arrangement with the hotel. However, if you need a breakfast box, please see the catering staff in the restaurant the day before (there is only one restaurant).

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## Photo Competition

Participants in this year's IEW are invited to submit examples of their artistic brilliance to the Photographic Competition which will be held during the weekend. Here's your chance to prove that even a humble iPhone snap can blitz something taken with the fanciest digital camera! Voting will take place before or during the dinner on Saturday, 22nd February, and prizes awarded to the winner in each of the following categories:

1. Culture & Heritage (camel photos go in this category)
2. Flora in the Wild
3. Fauna in the Wild
4. Landscapes (including sea, sky, city etc.)
5. Architecture
6. Miscellaneous

In addition, a prize will be awarded to the photograph voted as most popular (People's Choice).

The [linked document](#) contains competition guidelines and also an identification label which needs to be filled out and attached to the back of each entry. (If you don't have a printer, or run out of time, don't worry, we will make these available at the registration desk). You will be able to submit up to 6 photographs, with no more than three entries in any one category. We encourage our younger members to have a go and enter photographs also.

Please hand your printed photo(s) to an organising committee member from Friday 21st February till no later than 5 pm on the night of the competition (Saturday, 22nd February). We look forward to displaying many great entries!

## Programme Preview

### Guided Trips

- Al Ain Oasis
- Bird Watching @ Zakher Lake
- Collections Workshop
- Hili 14 Iron Age Settlement and Hili Grand Tomb
- Jebel Hafeet Hike
- Jimi Oasis
- Mezyad Fort
- Wadi Al Jazira, Oman
- Wadi Nahyan
- Wildlife Watching @ Ain Al Waal
- Wildlife Watching and Tracking @ Zakher Lake

### Trip Leaders

- Amer (Amro) Abu Kuhail
- Andre Fajgelj
- Areej Jaradat
- Brigitte Howarth
- Gary Feulner
- Geraldine Kershaw
- Huw Roberts
- Lesley Gregoricka
- Mark Beech
- Mary Lanaghan
- Roxanne Whelan

### Self-Guided Destinations

- Jebel Hafit Desert Park/Hafit Tombs
- Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Grand Mosque
- Al Qattara Souq
- Al Nabbagh Camel Race Track
- Jahili Fort
- Qasr Al Muwaiji
- Bait Mohammed Bin Khalifa
- Crafts Shop in Al Ain Oasis

*IEW 2025, Activities Schedule, updated 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025*

Friday 21st February														
	7 am	8 am	9 am	9.30 am	10 am	10.30 am	11 am	12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	2.30 pm	3 pm	6 pm	7 pm
A c t i v i t i e s													Registration Desk outside Mezyad Ballroom is open from 3 - 6 pm	

Saturday 22nd February															
	7 am	8 am	9 am	9.30 am	10 am	10.30 am	11 am	12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	2.30 pm	3 pm	6 pm	7 pm	
A c t i v i t i e s		Registration Desk open 7:30-8:30 am											Registration Desk outside Mezyad Ballroom is open from 3 - 6 pm		
		Bird Watching at Zakher Lake - Huw Roberts 8 - 11:30 am												Collections Brigitte Howarth Val Chalmers 4-6pm	
		Jebel Hafeet Hike - Mary Lanaghan & Andre Fajgelj 8am - 1pm													
		Jimi Oasis Walk - Amro Abu Kuhail 8.30 - 10.30am													
		Wadi Jazira, Oman - Brigitte Howarth 8am - 3pm													
		Wadi Nahyan - Gary Feulner 8.30 - 11:30 am (may be longer)													
													Photo Competition 6 pm IEW Dinner & program 6.30pm		

Sunday 23rd February															
	7 am	8 am	9 am	9.30 am	10 am	10.30 am	11 am	12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	2.30 pm	3 pm	6 pm	7 pm	
A c t i v i t i e s								Al Ain Oasis Walk - Areej Jaradat 12 - 3 pm							
				Hili 14 Iron Age Settlement and Hili Grand Tomb - Ali Al Meqbali/March Beech/Lesley Gregoricka 10 am - 12 pm											
			Mezyad Fort - Brigitte Howarth 9:30 - 11:30 am												
		Wildlife Watching at Ain Al Waal - Huw Roberts 7:30 - 11 am													
		Wildlife Watching and Tracking at Zakher Lake - Roxanne Whelan 7:30 - 11 am													

A larger version of this program overview is available [here](#).

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## Trip Descriptions & Sign-Up Forms

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### Al Ain Oasis

Areej Jaradat (0502298964)

**Sunday, 23rd February 12 pm - 3 pm. Meet at the [eastern oasis parking](#), then heading to the oasis' [eastern entrance](#) nearby**

Al Ain city takes its name from this historic oasis at the heart of the city. It is the largest of the six remaining oases in Al Ain city. The oasis has probably been in cultivation for at least 4000 years ago, and has graced the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2011. Evidence from other archaeological sites confirm that palm oases culture was in place in the third millennium BC. This walk will guide visitors into the heart of the oasis through an unconventional route where we will explore date plantations, falaj system, old doors' design and the meanings of it, a historical mosque, ancient mud walls standing as a silent witness to the past, and more. Many are surprised to find such tranquility in the middle of a bustling city, with major traffic just meters away! It's an excellent outing for families. But please note that it's not suitable for those using wheelchairs.

It's advised to wear long pants since we will be taking an unconventional route where spiny plants will be present on the sides. Also, please wear comfy closed shoes as the terrain is dusty, loose and uneven in some places. Be sure to bring enough water and snacks with you. You might also want to bring a camera to snap some memorable pictures!

\*There is some maintenance work going near the eastern entrance, don't let that confuse you, the entrance is still open at one end.

Sign Up [HERE](#) - Al Ain Oasis Walk

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### Bird Watching @ Zakher Lake

Huw Roberts (0502318074)

**Saturday, 22nd February, 8 am - 11:30 am. Meet at the [car park of the One To One Hotel](#)**

At an inland lake we will be looking for waders, herons, eagles, harriers, pipits, wagtails, rails, warblers and any other wintering, migrating or resident species that may be around.

The track to this location requires a vehicle with good clearance, so we should pool our 4WD resources before setting off from the car park. The lake is a 10 minute drive from the meeting point. We won't be walking far, but you should bring water and sun-protection.

Sign Up [HERE](#) - Bird Watching @ Zakher Lake

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### Collections Workshop

Brigitte Howarth (050 6197316)

**Saturday, 22nd February, 4 - 6 pm, Mezyad Ballroom**

Although some collecting had occurred in the 1940's and 1950's, material from these early collecting trips were described much later (e.g. Popov 1980). Recording of insects only began in earnest in the 1980's mainly as the result of the enthusiastic activities of amateur

expatriate residents, such as the founder of the ENHG, Bish Brown. In those early days, some individuals collected specimens, and curated specimens were collated by the newly founded Abu Dhabi chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group (ENHG). Expatriate life is transient and the individuals left the UAE and for many years the insects collected by them remained hidden amongst other stored material until in 2005 the collection was re-discovered. At this point the Al Ain chapter of the ENHG inherited the specimens which now form part of the Joint Al Ain and Abu Dhabi Emirates Natural History Group (JAAENHG) Insect Collection. I was made curator and custodian of the collection and it resides in a special room in my house.

This workshop will discuss the roles of collections such as the JAAENHG. Setting up different activities, there will be an opportunity to experience curation, look down a microscope, view parts of the JAAENHG collection, or use a fossil identification key developed by Val Chalmers. You are welcome to bring along objects/photos and we will gladly attempt to assist you towards an identification. This is a child-friendly activity!

Sign Up [HERE](#) - Collections Workshop

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### **Hili 14 Iron Age Settlement and Hili Grand Tomb**

**Ali Al Meqbali/Mark Beech/Lesley Gregoricka (050 752 7407)**

**Sunday, February 23rd February, 10 am - 12 noon**

**Please see below for the two segments of this trip, your signup is valid for both or one or the other. You can indicate at sign-up which segment you will join.**

Ali Al Meqbali is Archaeological Research Unit Head in Al Ain for the Historic Environment Department at the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. He is shortly about to complete his Phd at the University of Durham, UK, on Iron Age settlements in South-East Arabia.

Dr Mark Jonathan Beech is Scientific Research Lead for the Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi, prior to which he was Head of Archaeology and Palaeontology (Al Dhafra and Abu Dhabi capital regions) in the Historic Environment Department at the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi.

Dr Lesley Gregoricka is a Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Social Work at the University of South Alabama. Her primary research program investigates prehistoric mortuary landscapes across the United Arab Emirates and Oman, seeking to evaluate how shifting mortuary traditions in southeastern Arabia reflect corresponding changes in sociopolitical complexity and subsistence strategies. Dr Gregoricka is currently working in Al Ain with a research grant funded by the Zayed National Museum to investigate mortuary practices during the Bronze Age in South-East Arabia.

**First segment: Hili 14 (tour led by Ali Al Meqbali and Dr Mark Jonathan Beech) 10-11 am – Meet by the Hili 14 archaeological site**

(Google maps location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/7yJKjY42ZMCtBVmRA>)

Take a tour around the Iron Age settlement of Hili 4 led by Ali Al Meqbali, director of the current archaeological excavations taking place at the site. See the fortified walls, majilis, and the mudbrick walls of its buildings which were constructed around 3000 years ago. This important time period saw the development of aflaj systems and the domestication of the camel which revolutionised life for the populations of South-East Arabia during the Iron Age.

**Second segment: Hili Grand tomb, Hili Archaeological Park (tour led by Ali Al Meqbali,**

**Lesley Gregoricka and Dr Mark Jonathan Beech) 11am-12pm**

**Meet by the entrance to the Hili Archaeological Park (those of you already at the first part, move to the second part with Mark)**

(Google maps location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/M93R4YBM8LJU2SP99>)

Take a tour through the Hili Archaeological Park led by Ali Al Meqbali, who has directed many of the recent excavations within the Hili area. Visit the Grand Tomb where Dr Lesley Gregoricka will explain about Bronze Age mortuary practices and how societies treated their dead. The Umm an-Nar period dates to about 2500 BCE to 2000 BCE and is named after the island near Abu Dhabi on which remains of this important culture were first discovered. Its centrepiece is Hili Grand Tomb dating to about 2000 BCE. Built in a circular form with a diameter of up to 12 metres, and approximately 4 metres high, the tomb was used for the burial of people from the surrounding settlements. The tomb has two entrances, which are decorated with beautiful, engraved reliefs portraying human and animal figurines.

[Sign Up HERE](#) - Hili Iron Age Settlement and Hili Grand Tomb

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### **Jebel Hafeet Hike**

**Andre Fajgelj (054 498 7493), Mary Lanaghan (056 643 5510)**

**Saturday February 22, 8:00 am -1:00 pm (approximate)**

**Meet at [Jebel Hafeet Hike Parking](#) (take a left at the Salt Caves)**

Al Ain's iconic Jebel Hafeet rises to 1,240 meters above sea level within the Hajar Mountain range that extends to the tip of UAE and swings across the entirety of Northern Oman. We'll meet near the geothermal hot springs at Green Mubazzarah, then hike through Wadi Nahyan, ascending to a high ridge to enjoy panoramic views of the area. Along the way, we'll explore the unique fauna, flora, and geology of this remarkable mountain.

This hike is considered moderately challenging and suitable for experienced hikers, as the terrain is uneven and loose in many sections. Some may find the descent challenging.

Gear: Sturdy hiking shoes are essential – trainers are not advised. Please bring personal first aid supplies, plenty of water, sunscreen, a hat, a snack, and a comfortable backpack for the 4-5 hour adventure.

[Jebel Hafeet Hike - Sign up HERE](#)

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### **Jimi Oasis Walk**

**Amro Abu Kuhail (052 626 3330)**

**Saturday 22nd February, 8:30 am – 10:30, meeting point [car park](#)**

**24°15'20.6"N 55°44'51.6"E / 24.255722, 55.747667**

Explore the oasis, where ancient falaj irrigation systems showcase how early communities overcame water challenges. You will see diverse wildlife and old houses that reveal the region's rich history. You'll be able to enjoy the serene beauty of nature, blending culture and tranquility in one unique experience. As we explore this ancient landscape, we'll delve into the old challenges of water management, discovering the traditional falaj irrigation system that sustained life in the desert for generations.

We'll pass by old houses, standing as silent witnesses to the past, offering a glimpse into the lives of those who once called this oasis home. This walk will also include time to relax and absorb the serene beauty of the surroundings.

Proper hiking/walking footwear is essential as the ground is dusty, uneven and occasionally damp. Please bring a hat, water, snack, camera, notebook and binoculars. This is an ideal outing for families.

[Sign Up HERE](#) - Jimi Oasis

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### **Mezyad Fort - Photography**

**Brigitte Howarth (050 6197316)**

**Sunday 23 Feb 09:30 to 11:30 am. Meet at Ayla Bawadi Hotel Carpark**

Please note that we will **not** have access into the fort on this trip, thus, we will view the fort from the outside. The fort is the last of the facilities used by the Trucial Oman Scouts that has not been either destroyed or modified beyond recognition. Restoration work on the fort was halted several years ago and its future is still under discussion. Next to the fort there is an abandoned oasis and behind both the fort and oasis is one of the most spectacular views of Jebel Hafit. Walking around the outside of the fort offers many iconic photo opportunities of the fort and Jebel Hafit, and in and among the vegetation of the abandoned oasis we might find something interesting to photograph also.

Please wear suitable, closed walking shoes since the terrain can be dusty and sometimes uneven. It's also advised to wear long pants. Be sure to bring water and snacks with you. This trip lends itself best to be a photographic opportunity so therefore, you might also want to bring a camera!

**Sign Up [HERE](#) - Mezyad Fort**

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### **Wadi Jazira, Oman**

**Brigitte Howarth (050 619 7316)**

**Saturday, 22nd February 8 am to 3 pm. Meet at the [lower parking lot of Danat Al Ain](#)**

Please note the meeting place is not an error, we will meet at the lower parking lot of the Danat. This is a beautiful oasis and abandoned village, with evidence of copper smelting, actively used falaj systems and water storage dam, one of the oldest mango trees we have observed, and running water all year round. There should be many insects on the wing and some wildflowers to observe. There are areas where a canyon is accessible but you might get wet.

It should be possible to get a visa at the border, please ensure you have your passport with you. Very important is the following with regards your car and car insurance:

- Even with car insurance that covers Oman, the car insurer has to provide drivers with an 'Orange Card'. This is not a card and is not orange but a digital document that your insurer will provide that you can print. It includes a QR code and ensures that insurance cover is valid in Oman
- A printed copy of the Orange Card and Insurance Cover should be available to show the Omani border police
- Owner of the car has to be driving the vehicle and the car registration card has to be in the car

To prepare for this trip you should carry/have available at least 2 litres of water and arrive hydrated. Please consider bringing hydration tablets. Please carry a small personal First Aid kit, a snack, sturdy shoes for the oasis and village walk, along with long trousers to avoid



scratches and bites, walking sticks (optional), hat, sunscreen (please be mindful of residues left in water should you decide to enter the water), water shoes (optional), dry clothes, and possibly binoculars, notebook, identification guides.

Sign Up [HERE](#) - Wadi Jazira, Oman

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## Wadi Nahyan

Gary Feulner

**Saturday, 22nd February 8:30 to approx. 11:30. Meet at the [car park in Green Mubazzarah](#)**

Wadi Nahyan drains the slopes at the northwest of the Jebel Hafeet massif. The steep-dipping limestone bedrock slopes and cliffs make an interesting contrast to the ophiolite terrain and wadis of the main Hajar Mountains. The two environments also differ in the mix of flora and fauna seen.

Our trip will be a nature walk, not an adventure hike. We will move slowly, stopping to look at plants, animals (mostly insects and other arthropods) and fossils (nummulites, echinoids, gastropods, etc.), with ample time for photography. The rocky slopes are mostly bare, with sparse vegetation concentrated in and beside the wadi. Since last April's floods, there has been no significant rain.

Our route will cover the lower to middle reaches of the wadi. We will ascend very gently for the most part, with just a few shorter, steeper sections. Our total elevation gain will be no more than 125 meters. In some places there is a traditional trail (unimproved), but in almost all places (and especially in the wadi bed) we will be traversing ground that is stony and uneven, so this is not a "tourist" walk. Sturdy footwear and reasonably normal balance are essential.

The total length of the walk will be no more than 4 km (up and back). There is a natural turnaround point at a scenic plateau part-way up the wadi, where we can rest and explore before returning by the same route. However, how far we actually go will be determined by our rate of progress. The intended time for the walk will be 3.5 to 4.5 hours.

Participants should carry a minimum of 1.5 liters of water. Also personal first aid supplies (bandages and first-aid cream) for possible scratches from rocks or thorny plants. Snacks or sandwiches are recommended to keep up energy.

[Sign Up HERE](#) - Wadi Nahyan

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## Wildlife Watching at Ain Al Waal

Huw Roberts (0502318074)

**Sunday, 23rd February 7:30 am - 11 am. Meet at the [car park of the One To One Hotel](#)**

At a mountain-side site, we will check various plants, bushes and holes and the ground for arthropods, where we can hopefully identify many species. We will also keep an eye out for bigger wildlife such as birds.

We'll be walking on rough ground, and loose sand, where there are some holes, and we may brush against some acacia thorn bushes so appropriate footwear and clothing should be



worn. The track to this location requires a vehicle with good clearance, so we should pool our 4WD resources before setting off from the car park. The site is a 10 minute drive from the meeting point. We won't be walking far, but you should take water and sun-protection.

**Sign Up [HERE](#) - Wildlife Watching at Ain Al Waal**

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### **Wildlife Watching & Tracking @ Zakher Lake**

**Roxanne Whelan (050 520 4386)**

**Sunday, 23rd February, 7:30 am - 11 am. Meet at the [car park of the One To One Hotel](#)**

Similar to Huw's bird watching trip on Saturday, we will be looking out for birds as well as any wildlife signs, such as tracks and burrows within the surrounding sandy banks.

The track to this location requires a vehicle with good clearance, so we should pool our 4WD resources before setting off from the car park. The lake is a 10 minute drive from the meeting point. We won't be walking far, but you should bring water and sun-protection.

**[Sign Up HERE](#) - Wildlife Watching @ Zakher Lake**