

SHARAAN NATURE RESERVE



Sharaan Nature Reserve ©RCU



1,543km² (154,300ha)
2019 by Royal Decree
IUCN Protected Area Category
National Park (Category II)

Sharaan Nature Reserve

was officially declared by authorities in spring 2019. It is AlUla's first fully Protected Area, covering almost 1,600 km² of Saudi Arabia's north-western region. At its highest point, Mount Sharaan, it is 1,157m above sea level, although the typical altitude range is 900m to 1,100m.

Sharaan Nature Reserve features a varied natural landscape of massive sandstone formations that form a complex network of valleys (wadis), lava fields (harrats), gorges and canyons. With sandy desert, towering mountains, and fertile valleys, this vast protected area is home to the largest continuous canyon sandstone expanse in AlUla. The diverse and spectacular assemblage of geological features and natural habitats hosts a rich and thriving plant and animal life. Sharaan's varied habitats, coupled with the reserve's location, means that it offers both an ecological sanctuary

Key Topographical Components

Sharaan Canyons: Covering the central-eastern area, these canyons are the largest part of Sharaan Nature Reserve. **Eastern Canyons:** Located west of Sharaan Canyons, this north-south aligned canyon band includes the northern region referred to as Jibal AlRukab mountains. **Al Majaz:** Dividing Sharaan and the Eastern Canyons, AlMajaz is a 2 km-wide and 30 km-long plain known locally as Madakheel. Forming the smallest

North-western part of the Protected Area, Madakheel features stunning sandstone canyons forming a corridor to Harat Uwayrid BR. Due to its diversity of land-scapes, significant ancient petroglyphs and inscriptions in both ancient and modern scripts. There are a number of late prehistoric, monumental funerary sites in Sharaan, which are known for their large size and unique shapes. Well preserved, they owe their remarkable condition to Sharaan's remote location, safeguarding them from human impacts. There are approximately 450 ancient rock art sites across the reserve, depicting a variety of artistic motifs, numerous petroglyphs of wild animals and hunting scenes, and inscriptions in both ancient and modern scripts.



Ancient rock art — Mounted hunters with spears ©RCU

Ancient History and Civilisations

Sharaan bears witness to diverse cultural traditions and civilisations, both settled and nomadic, extending thousands of years into the past. Most notable among these are the Nabataean civilisation and

Geology of Sharaan

These sandstone formations, aged between 500 and 480 million years old, were formed on the super continent of Gondwana.

Clues within the rocks, including fossils, ripple marks and well-rounded quartz grains, show that they were formed by rivers. The whole region was submerged under water 500 million years ago. Large, round pebbles and cross-bedding found here further indicate that the area was home to extensive deltas and waterways, forming the landscape you see today.



Sandstone carved by millennia of rain and wind ©RCU

Regulations & Staying Safe

We welcome you to SNR and remind you to stay safe in the desert, and to protect the natural and cultural treasures around you. Anyone entering the parks and reserves of AlUla must adopt the mantras of “safety first” and of “leave only footprints; take only memories.”

PLEASE REMEMBER TO FOLLOW THESE RULES AND GUIDELINES:

- › Do not touch or deface any rock art, petroglyphs or engravings
- › Do not graffiti or damage the rocks in any way
- › Do not harm or disturb wildlife
- › Do not light fires
- › Do not litter
- › Stay on the walking trails
- › No self-driving, off-roading or free camping are permitted
- › Always carry water
- › Use sun cream
- › Wear protective clothing, hats & other gear
- › Be culturally sensitive and non-intrusive (especially when taking photos)
- › Avoid light pollution: No strong lights, string lights, laser pointers or projectors

WHEN HIKING OR WALKING, PLEASE ALSO REMEMBER TO:

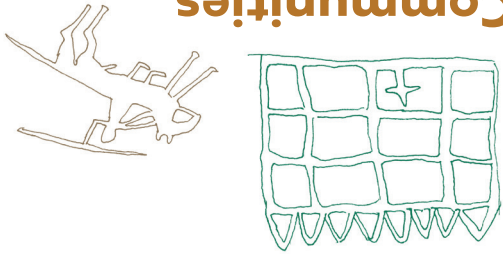
- › Time your hike carefully
- › Stay hydrated
- › Carry essential supplies
- › Rest in the shade
- › Pace yourself
- › Be mindful of heat-related illnesses
- › Travel in groups
- › Inform others of your plans
- › Be prepared for emergencies

By following these guidelines and using common sense, you can hike safely in desert landscapes and mitigate potential risks from extreme heat and potentially dangerous wildlife. Enjoy the unique beauty of AlUla. Always remember to **stay safe**.

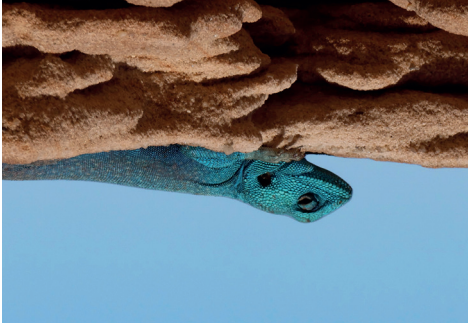
Emergency contacts

Kingdom Emergency (without a SIM card): 112
Civil Defense: 998.
Police: 999.
Special Forces for Environment Security (SFES): 0114126888

Communities & Life Around the Reserve



A species of agama — Pseudotrapelus ©RCU



Grasses flourish after the winter rains in Sharaan ©RCU

Key Activities & Attractions



Moving through Sharaan's labyrinth of sandstone ravines and wadis, the variety of extraordinarily shaped features such as high cliffs, columns, pinnacles, domes and arches is stunningly impressive. These and many more memories can be created by joining the attractions and activities available to the visitors of the Reserve, such as:

- › Sharaan Nature Tour by 4x4
- › Sharaan Safari Tour by 4x4
- › Multi-day Tours or Treks
- › Day or Night Hikes
- › Youth Adventure Camp

At present, all visitors wanting to visit Sharaan must book a tour or activity through one of our approved vendors: **Husaak** (husaak.trekkssoft.com), **Pangaea** (pangaeaclub.net) and **Masarat** (www.masaratclub.com). Tours can also be booked online or in person, in AlUla, at the company offices.

For more details and for booking, please visit: www.experiencealula.com/

Sharaan Nature Reserve is part of the lands occupied by the Manabaha sub-tribes of the larger Anazah tribe. As part of their traditional homeland, the Manabaha people were the main beneficiaries of its natural resources. This included grazing land, access to water, firewood and small agriculture sites, for date palms or wheat crops. Although it is a fenced landscape, there are two areas of Sharaan that have been designated as Community Grazing zones, where the traditional rights of herders are upheld, but access is controlled via permits. This protects local herders from over-grazing by outsiders and regulates grazing to ensure it is rotational and sustainable. Still powerful today, Sheikhhs (community leaders) once had total authority and could give orders to everyone in the tribe. This had the benefit of safeguarding important resources, by declaring areas off-limits for grazing or only allowing hunting during specific seasons or species. Today the Sheikhhs cooperate with reserve managers to ensure wildlife continues to be protected.

MAP OF THE AREA

Ecological Diversity of Sharaan

Sharaan is a mosaic of open desert and intricate canyons, with varying elevations, provides diverse habitats and microclimates.

Sharaan Nature Reserve hosts unique habitats for a wide variety of mammals, making up 25% of the 110 species across Saudi Arabia.

These mammals belong to five main families: **Canids** (wolves and foxes), **Felids** (sand and cats), **Ungulates** (oryx and gazelles), **Bats**, and **Rodents**, with sizes ranging from as tiny as 5 grams (Kuhl's Pipistrelle Bat) to a hefty 100-200 kilograms (Arabian oryx). In the post, **Arabian Leopards** lived here, as evidenced by numerous rock art depictions throughout the reserve.

As part of ongoing conservation efforts, Sharaan Nature Reserve is seen as a potential site for reintroducing Arabian leopards into their native habitats.



Arabian Leopard
Panthera pardus nimr

THE ARABIAN LEOPARD

The Arabian Leopard is a leopard subspecies native to the Arabian Peninsula. Its fur varies from yellow to deep golden or grey, marked with rosettes. Smaller than both African and Persian leopards, the Arabian leopard is still the largest cat in the Arabian Peninsula.

There are no recent records of the Arabian leopard in AlUla. It is presumed to be locally extinct, although it is yet to be confirmed. They face threats like habitat loss, prey depletion from hunting, illegal wildlife trade, and killing in defense of livestock. In recent years efforts hves been made to bring back these iconic, apex predators; allowing them to once again roam freely across AlUla's lava fields (harrahs), mountains (jebels), and valleys (wadis), sitting majestically atop the food chain, emblematic of an intact and thriving ecosystem.

The Big Seven

- Arabian oryx
Oryx leucoryx
- Nubian ibex
Capra nubiana
- Arabian wolf
Canis lupus arabs
- Sand cat
Felis margarita
- Striped hyena
Hyuena hyuena, found outside but nearby SNR
- Arabian gazelle
Gazella arabica
- Arabian sand gazelle
Gazella marica



Thorn tree
©RCU

Other important mammals

- Caracal
Caracal caracal
- African wildcat
Felis lybica
- Bianford's fox
Vulpes cana
- Red fox
Vulpes vulpes
- Rock hyrax
Procavia capensis
- Desert hedgehog
Hemiechinus oethiopicus



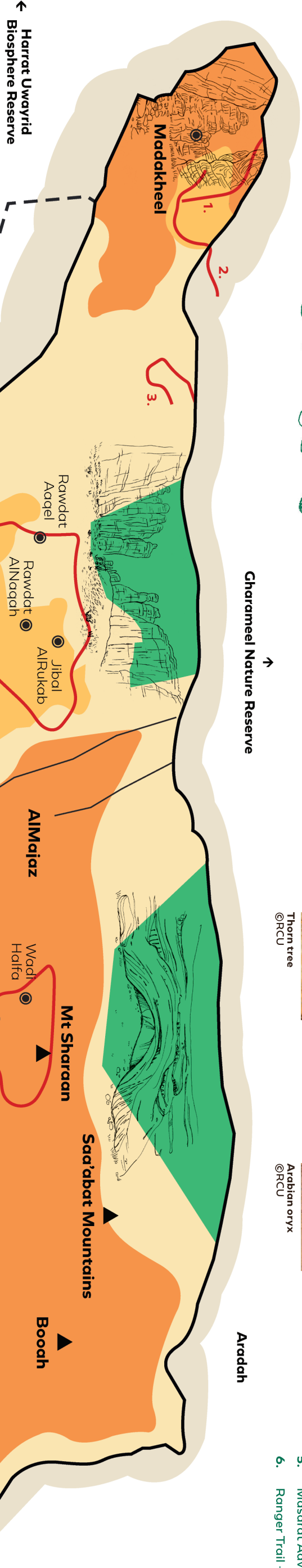
Arabian oryx
©RCU

LEGEND

- Reserve buffer zone
- Nature reserve boundary
- Semi-intensive Use Zone (SUZ)
- No Disturbance Zone (NDZ)
- Intensive Use Zone (IUZ)
- Seasonal grazing areas
- Community grazing zones
- Landmark
- Mountain

TRAILS

- Husack Adventures
- Camp Trail
- Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail
- Pangaqa Safari
- Masarat Adventures
- Ranger Trail — Restricted Access



Birds

- Arabian partridge
Alectoris melanoccephala
- Sand partridge
Ammoperdix heji
- Chukar partridge
Alectoris chukar
- Ostrich
Struthio camelus, to be reintroduced in 2024
- Barbary falcon
Falco peregrinus peregrinoides
- Griffon vulture
Gyps fulvus
- Lappet-faced vulture
Torgos tracheliotos
- Desert owl
Strix hadorami
- Arabian green bee-eater
Merops cyanophrys
- Arabian babbler
Argya squamiceps
- Arabian wheatear
Oenanthe lugentoides
- Eurasian hoopoe
Upupa epops



Flora

- Polygala sinaica
- Capparis deciduas
- Haloxylon persicum
- Ficus salicifolia
- Cymbopogon schoenanthus
- Astragalus sieberi
- Ziziphus nummularia
- Thymbra nabateorum
- Pancreatium sickenbergeri
- Cenchrus divivus
- Ferula communis
- Vachellia gerrardii

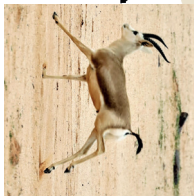
Hegra

Al Hir Village

Al Mu'tadil



Wadi racer
©RCU



Sand gazelle
©RCU

Wadi Nakhlah Nature Reserve



Polygala sinaica

Reptiles & Amphibians

- Spiny-tailed lizard
Uromastix aegyptia
- Desert monitor
Varanus griseus
- Sinai agama
Pseudotrapelus sinaitus
- Arabian toad
Sclerophrys arabica
- Elegant racer
Platyceps elegantissimus