

Ta'az:

A Journey in the City of Dreams

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Ta'az: A general view.

منظر عام لمدينة تعز

Ta'az is regarded as one of the most important and beautiful cities of Yemen. Because of its moderate year-round climate, this important province, which is also the country's third largest city, has become an international summer and winter resort.

Ta'az enjoys majestic natural beauty manifested in the surrounding mountains, plains and orchards situated on the coast of the Red Sea. With the temperate weather, it is a popular tourist destination for both Yemenis and visitors from other countries.

Ta'az's God-given advantages have been appreciated for centuries. A distinguished writer in the Seventh and Eighth Islamic centuries, for example, had the following

words to say about the city:

«A Yemeni might spend the summer in Ta'az and the winter in Zabid. It is an area where water is plentiful, the air is cool, and fruits are in abundance. It is indeed the finest and greatest of the cities of Yemen, and the home of its kings».

Ta'az has been witness to the march of civilization and has enjoyed prosperity in all things since time immemorial, as can be discerned by the historical remains that still remain, including among them mosques with their characteristically lofty minarets. Moreover, it has continued to renew itself and is today a modern metropolis, a city of love and peace, known by the locals as

«the city of dreams».

Ta'az is situated between two areas in Yemen, al-Jund in the east and Jeb in the south-west. It is approximately 256 kilometres south of the capital Sana'a, north of the equator, located in the centre of the Sana'a, Aden and Zabid triangle.

Ta'az has an area of 10,420 square kilometres and a population of 1.5 million people, and is around 1,500 meters above sea level, increasing towards the south east of the city to intercept with the Jabal Sabr, the mountain that overlooks Ta'az at 3,200 meters above sea level. From this summit, visitors will see the majesty of the city and its scenery. ➤

City Tourism



جامع معاذ بن جبل
(رضي الله عنه)
The Mosque of
Ma'ath ibn Jabal.

Historical Background

The bastion built on the summit was the precursor to the city itself, which was built later. It played a unique role in the creation and development of the city as it became the headquarters for rulers. Within it, many palaces were constructed, such as Dar al-Imara (House of Command) and Dar al-Adab (House of Literature). It contained gates and fences, and its first district was Adiana, followed later by Thu'abat. The bastion was pivotal to the city as a whole, indeed one might describe it as both the city's beginning and its end.

The Ta'az bastion was built in the year 1407CE, corresponding to 439AH, by Sultan Abdullah ibn Muhammed al-Sulayhi. But, it was the Ayyubid dynasty who were, more precisely, the ones who effectively built Ta'az when Shams ad-Dawla Turanshah, brother of Saladin, arrived there in 1173CE / 568AH. He chose this particular spot and drew the required architectural plans to turn it into his headquarters. Therein he built palaces and houses which were adorned with orchards. Ta'az thus emerged as a beautiful city where Ayyubid invaders settled over a period extending almost half a century. The ruler, Mu'iz, was the first to build schools here, the first one being the Madrassa al-Safina in Mughraba.

The city expanded when rule transferred among the Ayyubids to the Bani Rasul. The name, Ta'az, originally came from the bastion. When the city took the name of the bastion, the latter was then referred to as al-Qahira. In the tenth Hijri century, Ta'az had two names: Adaina and Ta'az, but the latter became more common and came to refer solely to the city. Historians started using two names for the city which was a common tradition that signified its importance. Ta'az was also known as Bustan al-Saliheen, or The Orchard of the Virtuous, because there were many people of virtue living in it at the time.

The Old City

Ta'az used to be divided into three parts, the first was inhabited by the Sultan and his entourage along with his administration. This was Thua'bat. The second was inhabited by the princes, and known as Udayna. The third was inhabited by the commoners, and was called al-Mahalib.

The city's fence was built later than the fortress. It was a high solid fence made of a mixture of mud and stones and crosses at the edge of mountains and highlands. Along the fence there are checkpoints and openings that look like doors in height and shape, but whose function was to filter the water that flowed along the area, and also to

remove stones and other unwanted materials that are carried with it.

The fence has four doors and each door has an opening. There are also two big openings at the sides of these doors. These are the Musa Door, the Big Door, the Madajir Door, and the Victory (Nasr) Door.

But, none of these four doors remained, with the exception of Musa Door and the Big Door, while the other two doors crumbled and no traces of them are left. The fence embodies many districts, the most notable of which are al-Ashrafiyya, al-Mudhafar, al-Jibertiyyah, and the district of Is'haaq and Abdul Hadi al-Siweedi.

Ta'az's historical features include the Mosque of al-Ashrafiyya, al-Mudhafar, al-Nouriyya, Atabekiyya School, al-Mu'adiyya and al-Mu'atabiyya.

There are also many ancient palaces. The late Muhammad al-Mujahid states in his book, Ta'az: The Green Branch, that there were twenty palaces in Ta'az, the oldest of which are two that are still standing. These are the house of Ali Mujahid, whose age is estimated at 600 years; and the house of Atba, which is about 370 years old.

In the old city of Ta'az, there are many shops which sell souvenirs and traditional cloths that are peculiar to the place and relevant to its history. Nearby, there is the souk (al-Sherbeeni, which links the Big Door with ➤

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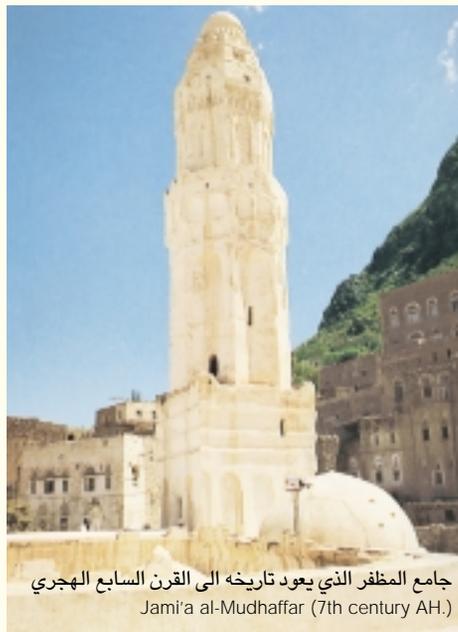
Musa Door and stretches over two streets, one of them housing shops selling spices, varieties of cheese, and popular handmade objects; and another which houses shops selling garments and traditional cloth items. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that Old Ta'az was famous for perfume-making and extracting measured drugs from herbs. Many names were renowned for their excellence in this skill, which was known as hathfi. Ta'az was also the first in the market of pharmacy, being the first city to have such a shop, the Pharmacy of Hassan Agha. Science and knowledge prospered here, and Ta'az's library, which was founded during the reign of King Ashraf Nassir al-Rasuli, resembled the library of Cordoba in Andalusia in terms of its sheer size and the value of its contents.

Islamic History

When the Holy Prophet Muhammad sent his revered companion, Ma'ath ibn Jabal, to the people of Yemen, inviting them to embrace Islam, ibn Jabal chose the area of al-Jund as headquarters for his mission. It was from there that he went to Sana'a, staying with the Muslim tribe of Bani al-Aswad.

There, Ma'ath built a mosque which cemented his mission, and in which he preached Islam to the people of Yemen.

Ta'az was left largely out of history books until the establishment of the Sulayhid State (439-532 AH), when Sultan Abdullah ibn Muhammed al-Sulayhi, the brother of King Ali the founder, built Ta'az Fortress, where King Mukarram Ahmed ibn Ali al-Sulayhi made it his headquarters upon assumption of the caliphate.



جامع المظفر الذي يعود تاريخه الى القرن السابع الهجري
Jami'a al-Mudhaffar (7th century AH.)



مسجد السعيد - عصفيره
al-Sa'eed Mosque - Usayfaira.

After that, the Ayyubids, under the leadership of Shams ad-Dawla, arrived and the area known as Ta'az unanimously preferred by them. Shams thereupon decreed that this area would always be the headquarters for his kingdom and of that of his successors after him.

But his stay in Yemen did not last long, and he departed never to return again. His brother, Sayf al-Islam, took over and devoted all his efforts to the building of the new city. He dug rivers and built palaces, and decorated it with wide orchards which contained many varieties of tree. He was, as mentioned, also the first to build schools in Ta'az.

The city expanded beyond belief during the final transfer of power to the Bani Rasul, to the point that «King Mudhaffar Yousif ibn Umar» took the final step to declare it as the capital of his kingdom. His father, «Umar ibn Ali ibn Rasul», was the first king of the Rasulid State.

The rule of Mudhaffar extended to forty-seven years in which his capital, Ta'az, occupied an important position among Arab cities. The city witnessed many events, especially during the era of the Tahirid State, the Fatimid State and the Mamluk State. Thereafter, Mudhaffar ibn al-Imam Sharafuddin arrived, seizing the city in 941AH.

Imam Ahmed made it the headquarters of his rule in 1948CE, a period that lasted until his demise in 1962. After the Yemeni Revolution, Ta'az experienced an expansion manifested through the building of schools, universities, and vital institutions. That expansion made Ta'az the industrial capital of Yemen.

Most Important Streets of Ta'az

The following streets are the most important ones in the city:

- Jamal Street.
- Aljumhuri Street.
- 26 September Street.
- al-Harish Street.
- Usayfayra Street
- Muhammad Ali 'Uthman Street.
- Al-Mughtaribin Street.
- Camp Street.

Most Important Historical Mosques and Religious Establishments

1. The Mosque of Ahl al-Kahaf (The Mosque of the People of the Cave), which is situated in the village of al-Mi'aqab.

This is very ancient with its amazing cave, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

2. Jami'a al-Jund.

Founded by the companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Ma'ath ibn Jabal, who built it when he came to Yemen in the ninth year of the Hegira.

3. Jami'a al-Mudhaffar.

Built by «Mudhaffar ibn Yousif ibn Umar» in 647AH.

4. Jami'a Madrassa al-Ashrafiya.

Built by King Ashraf II in 778AH.

5. The Minaret of al-Husayniya.

Built by Husayn Pasha, the young Prince of Ta'az. It is a magnificent and rare work of art.

Bastions And Fortresses

The Fortress of Cairo is currently undergoing renovation work to restore it to its days of glory. Of particular note is the Bastion of al-Aroos (The Bride) at the top of Mount Sabr, and the Bastion al-Damlus, in al-Salu.

Markets

The Old City has a popular market every Thursday and Friday in the al-Shinini area. This has all the city's requirements vis-a-vis dairy and agricultural produce. What ➤

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distinguishes this market are the types of shopper to be seen, in their variety of fashions and their many accents.

Other popular markets in the villages include al-Dhabab (fog), al-Barah, Hajdah Market, and Dimna Khadeer, where livestock, including camels and sheep, is sold.

Baths

There are numerous natural as well as spa baths in the city, the most famous of which are Wadi al-Zagharir and Wadi Rasyan. Some of the baths are heated by fuel, such as al-Mudhaffar Bath and al-Na'eem (luxury) Bath.

Museums

There are two museums in Ta'az: The National Museum, which shows prototypes of what has been found relating to ancient fortresses in different areas of Yemen throughout both pre-Islamic and later eras. It also contains many official political documents from the period which preceded the revolution.

Al-Aradhi Museum, which shows the remains of royal palaces belonging to the city before the revolution. It also has an ancient library.

Crafts and Industries

Most of the crafts are concentrated in the Old City (Bab Musa, The Big Door, and al-Shinini) where silver and other jewellery are made. The crafts here include making jambi (daggers), making traditional agricultural tools, and pottery tools and porcelains. The traditional toolmaking and handcrafts are among the most important tourist attractions in the city.

Universities, Religious Schools, and Libraries

Ta'az has experienced an architectural boom, especially in the last few years



أحد محلات بيع التحف الفضية والخناجر
A Jewellery shop : silver work and daggers.



Jami'a and Madrassa al-Ashrafiya (8th century AH.)

مسجد ومدرسة الأشرفية - تعز

following the reunification of Yemen. This is manifested in the construction of numerous state and private universities, as well as schools and public libraries. The most important of these are:

University of Ta'az,
University of Science and Technology,
University of Applied Sciences,
The High Institute,
The national Institute for Management Science,
Al-Sa'eed Public Library,
Dar al-Fikr Library,
The Revolution Awareness Library.

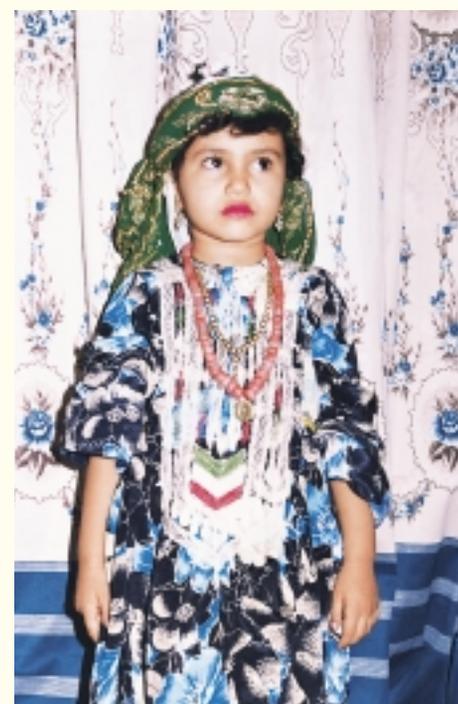
Tourist Places

There are many beautiful tourist parks which surround the city, among which are:

Al Ta'awin (Cooperation) Park and Swimming Pool,
Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Park
Unity Gardens,
Ta'awin Gardens in Hoban
Usayfaira Gardens,
Wadi al-Dhabab,
Warzan,
Jabal Sabr,
Al-Makha'a Bank,
Dreamland Gardens,
Namrust on Mount Sabr.

Hotels and Buildings

The erection of hotels and buildings, which is a reflection of the phenomenon of increased trading and managerial activities, meant that many people have come



فتاة من جبل صبر بالزي الشعبي
A young girl from mount Sabr in her traditional costume.

to the city from different parts of the country and from all over the world.

One of the most important facilities that will soon be opened is the Hotel al-Sa'eed Sovotel, with 126 rooms, six luxurious suites, two restaurants, shops, a banquet and party room, meeting rooms, a swimming pool, a sport and health facility, and many other quality services. The hotel is managed by the world-renowned Sovotel Company. There are scores of other hotels and buildings that offer a 24-service. ■