

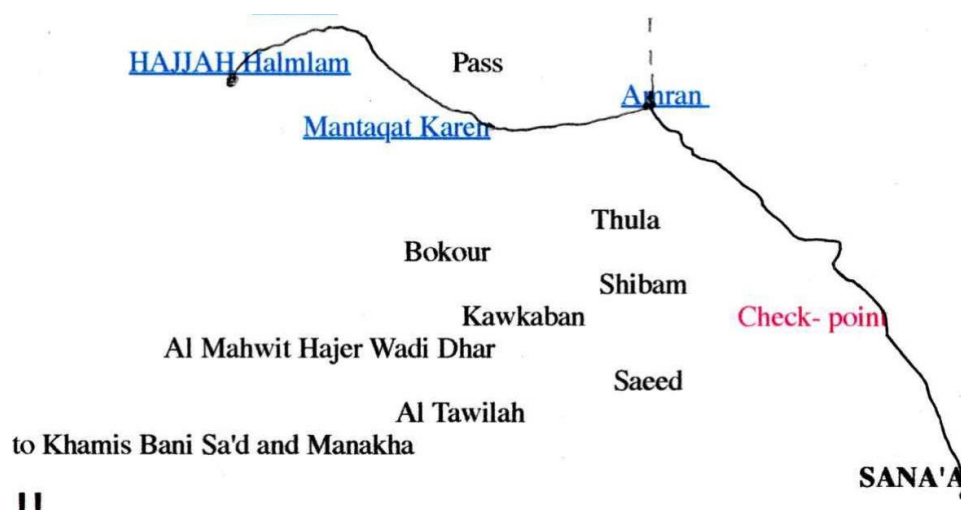
## Yemen – Arabia Felix – A fantastic experience – Maree Papworth – Part 4

### Sana'a to Hajjah and Amran day trip – Sana'a to Sa'dah, overnight stay



Hajjah

Hajjah is 109km from Sa'ana along high, steep winding roads making for a long day.



There were many checkpoints on this road apparently in the attempt to limit tourists (particularly those unaccompanied) in the northern part of the country.

But what we saw along the way was amazing. Some scenes could have been from bygone times.

Travelling from Sana'a to Hajjah, we passed through Amran which we explored on the return trip.



**Mantaqat Karen** is the first village after Amran. Here the local children wanted to sell us fossils (sea urchins and gastropods.) Susan enjoyed the purchase process of bargaining but was disappointed to see that one father immediately took the money from his son to go and buy khat.





In the countryside, we had seen many Yemenis carrying rifles, ready for use, not accessories to their clothing like the jambiya (dagger).

At our lunchtime roadside stop in Mantaqat Karen, we found that all the outside tables, where we preferred to sit and watch the world go by, were taken. A group of men sat at one table with a pile of rifles on the next. As we prepared to go inside, a man stood and with his arm swept the firearms to one end of the table and indicated we should sit down. Not the usual lunchtime sharing a table with a pile of Kalashnikovs.



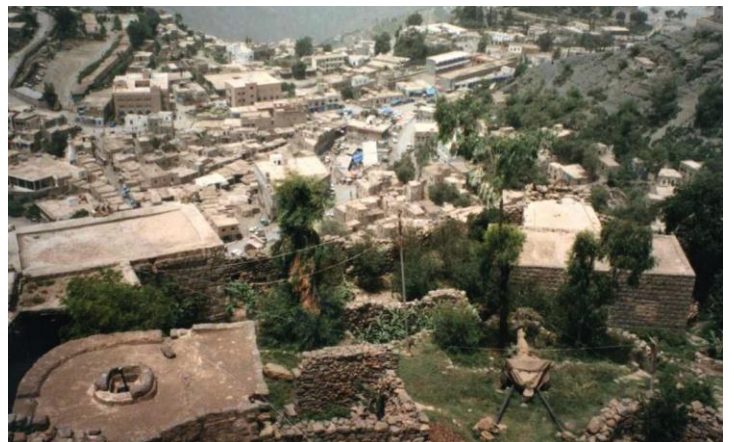
Shahal Ain Ali (Ain means spring).



Local children enjoying a swim while women do the washing



At Hajjah, the main attraction of the town, set on top of a mountain, was the remains of a Turkish citadel.



Views of Hajjah from the Turkish Citadel





A young shepherdess



Woman tending goats.



Awaiting transport at a roadside stop.





Ali posing with rifle and buying himself some khat - the real reason for this roadside stop



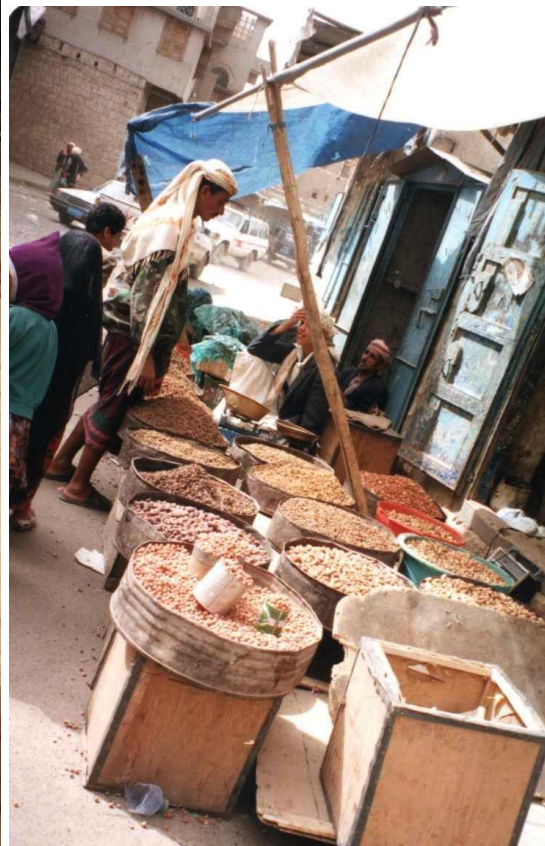
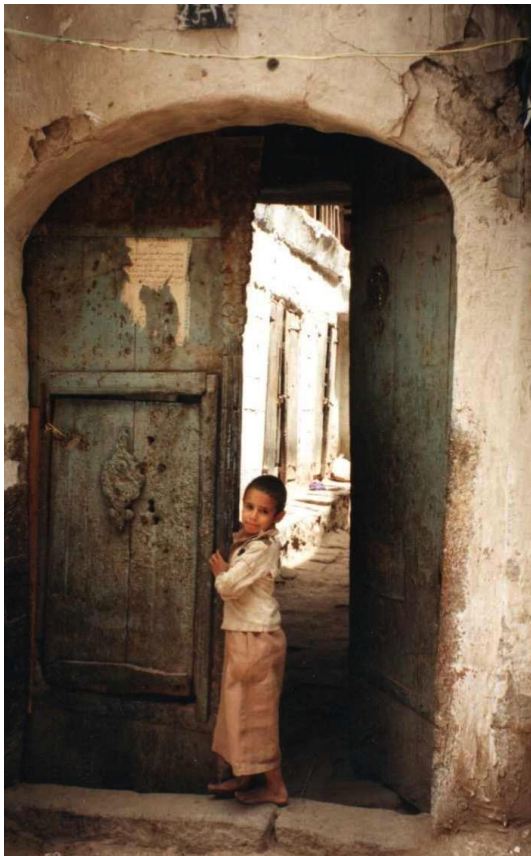
Khat trees





**Amran** is a walled city in the middle of fields, and is located at the crossroads between the road north to Sa'dah and west to Hajjah. The ramparts, 10m high and about 3km long, remained almost intact in 1995 but I am not sure how much of the old city and walls have survived recent wars.

The houses in old Amran are built of stone and clay. The roof parapets have raised corners.





From Amran we returned to Sana'a for a two day break before our trip to Sa'dah.

## Sa'dah

Sa'dah, which is 175km north of Sana'a, once played a major part of the frankincense trade. Situated close to the border with Saudi Arabia, it was the furthest north stay of our trip. Here, where stone was scarce, the houses were made mainly of clay. For stability, the walls are thickest at the bottom narrowing for the upper floors. The top storey holds the majlis (reception area) and most have extensive views of the city and surrounds.



The walled city of Sa'dah

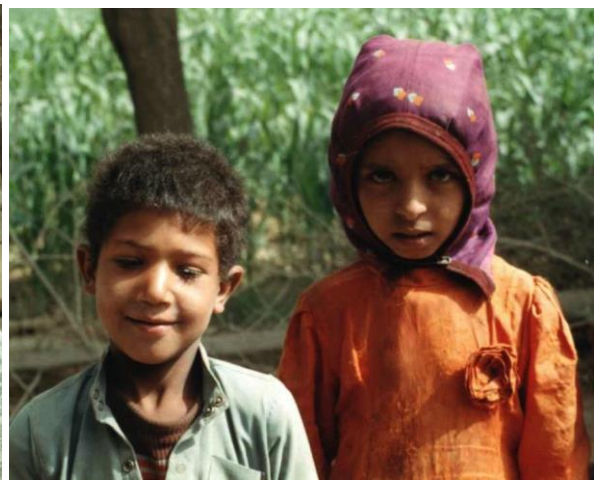


Around Sa'dah, our passports were often checked by armed officials. There was a feeling of tension in the air and we heard gunfire at night with no explanations forthcoming.





Jambiya makers in Sa'dah



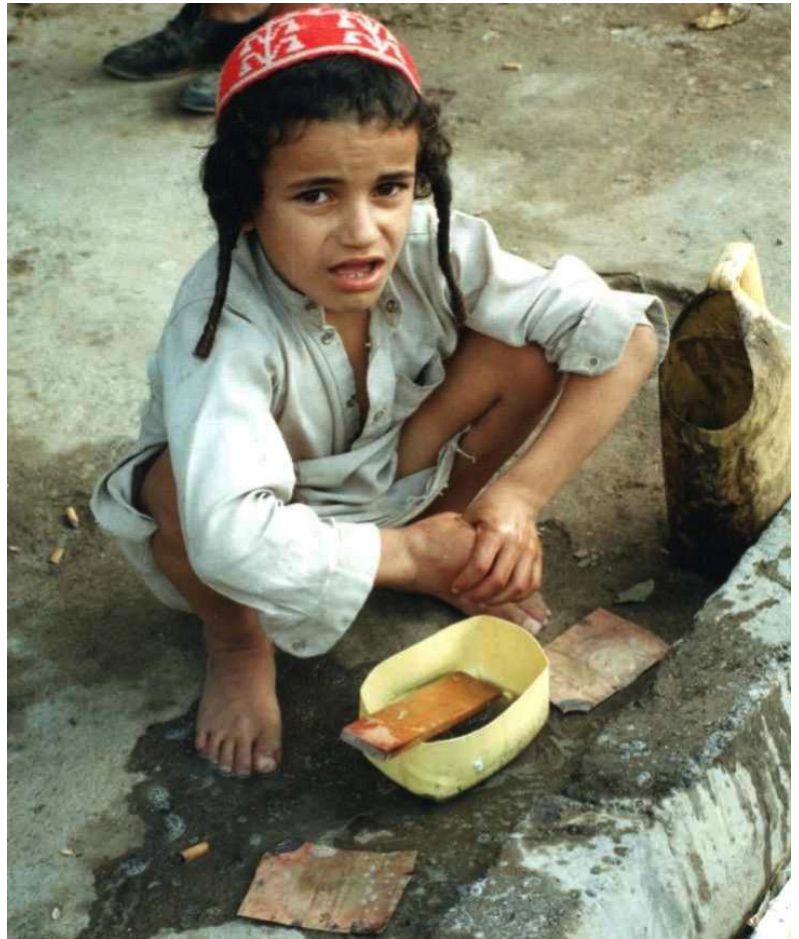
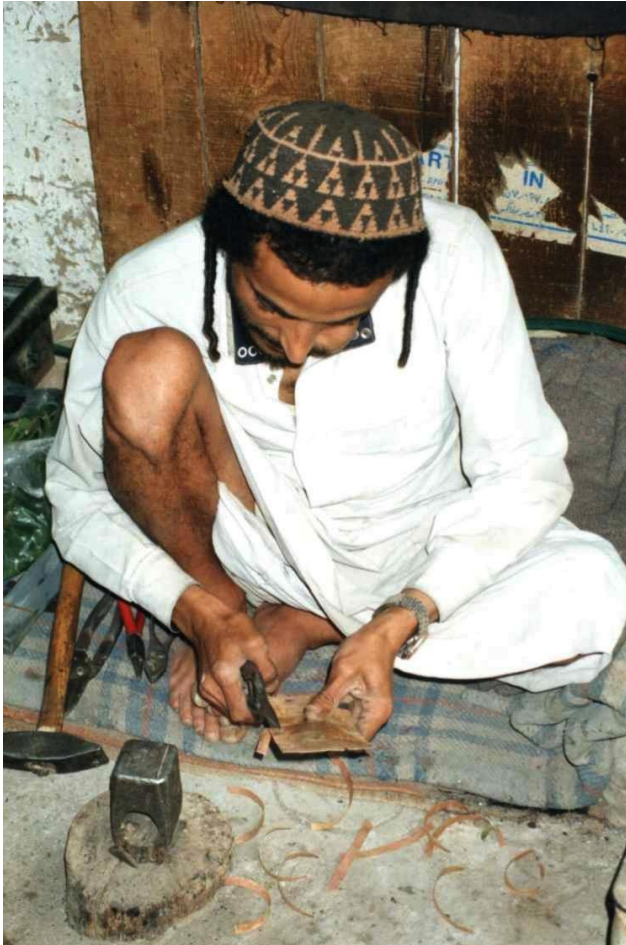
The girls in this area wear bonnet type headwear from babyhood to marriage



## Jewish silversmiths

In 1945, in 'Operation Magic Carpet', the majority of Yemenite Jews were airlifted to Israel. As artisans and traders, they had contributed well to the society.

By 1995, Sa'dah had one of the few remaining Jewish communities in Yemen. We observed accomplished Jewish silversmiths and antique silver shops run by fathers and sons. The sidelocks of hair (simonim) are a distinguishing feature which differentiates them from their non-jewish neighbours.



In August this year, 2020, it was announced that the remaining Jews in Yemen, estimated at around 50 to 100 people, are to immigrate to the United Arab Emirates.



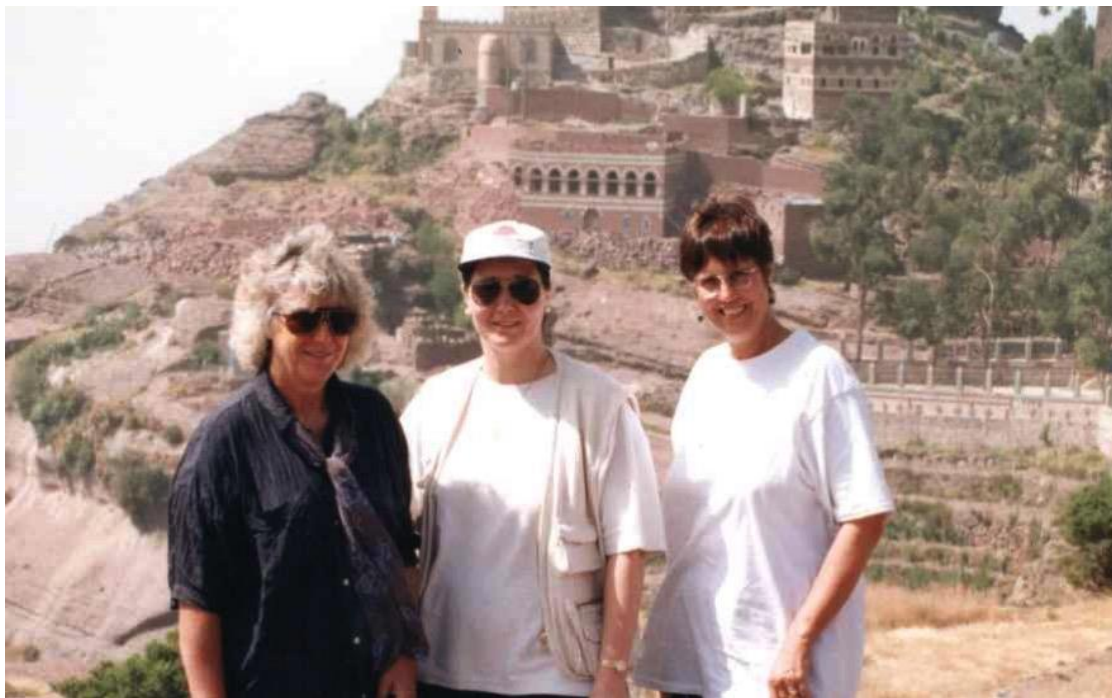


We returned to Sana'a with wonderful memories of cities, villages, everyone and everything along the way.

Our fantastic experience took place in an era when Yemen was unsettled but still accessible. Today the country is in turmoil and, with war and a virus worldwide, it would be impossible.

### **THE END – A fantastic experience**

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Over the past 25 years since our joint trip to Yemen, Susan, Marilyn and I have kept in touch and met up many times in many different places. Susan currently lives in London UK, Marilyn in Dunedin New Zealand and Maree in Melbourne Australia.

This October, Susan had planned her first trip to Australia which is now on hold. **If only we could still travel ...**