

FLASHBACK FRIDAY SMUGGLERS PARADISE

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Khasab, Musendham, Enclave of Oman, October 2006. The sharp tip of Arabia, known as the Musandam Point, sticks into the Persian Gulf, separating it from the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Hormuz is only 30 miles wide from Musandam Point to the coast of Iran, and through it passes a substantial fraction of the world's crude oil.

I came here to see the Persian smugglers. Go down to the wharves in Khasab and you will see them piled high with waterproof-wrapped bales of clothes, cases of soft drinks and juice, cartons of children's toys and electronic goods, an entire shopping mall of stuff, all ready to be crammed and tied down into 20 ft. long open speedboats with powerful outboard motors capable of outrunning Iranian Navy patrols.

There are dozens, scores, of waiting speedboats. The run from Khasab harbor to coves on the Iranian coast or the Iranian island of Qeshm takes about three hours. An average night will see dozens of speedboats racing across the Strait of Hormuz smuggling goods into Iran. The smugglers couldn't have been more friendly to me. They hate the mullahs and are proud they are helping poor people in Iran. I had a great time with them. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #169* photo ©Jack Wheeler)

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