



Frontside of house 1



House 2 from the south-west



Location of the Shimal Stone Houses

## Ras al-Khaimah Heritage

# Shimal Stone Houses



Government of Ras al-Khaimah



Department of  
Antiquities  
and Museums

[www.rakmuseum.gov.ae](http://www.rakmuseum.gov.ae)



RAK Tourism  
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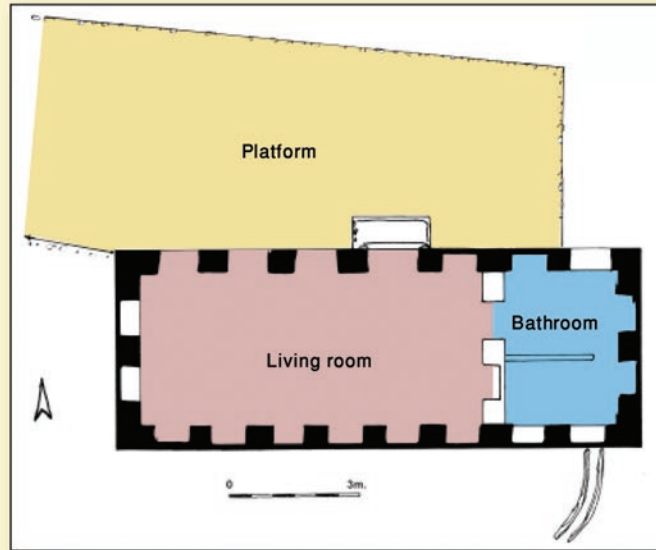
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## Shimal Stone Houses



Decoration above the entrance of house 1



Plan of house 1

One of Ras al-Khaimah's most impressive natural features is "Wadi Bih", a dramatic, steep valley in the mountains, washed out during millions of years by flooding winter rains. During this process, a huge gravel-fan, up to 20 kms wide, was created at the outlet of the wadi. At the edge of this fan a fertile green belt of palm gardens developed due to the richness of the water soaked ground. This area, called Shimal, has long been covered with date palms and served as an important source of food and water since ancient times.

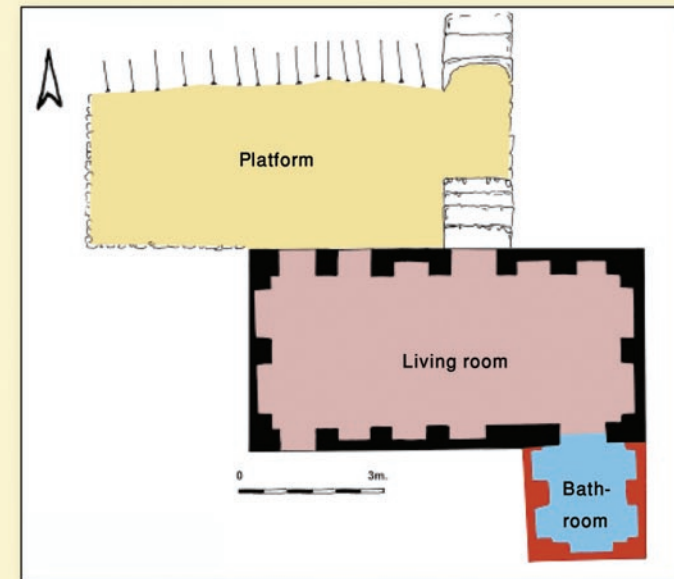
Originally standing inside lush palm gardens, and only a few meters apart, the two old summer houses in Shimal were built from wadi stones and mortar. Both have windows and wind-catchers ("Barjeel"), a sophisticated system of open niches, which lead cool air from the shady palm garden into the room to aid ventilation. While the windows of both houses are mainly built into the northern walls, the wind-catchers can be found on the south side. Their special design keeps the sun out of the interior rooms.

Both buildings show different layouts from the same basic idea. House 1, which is the bigger and more elaborate one, has a rectangular ground plan. The entrance area is enhanced by steps and the door is specially designed with saw tooth frames and a beautiful central rosette over other cut-out patterns. Each summer house has a bathroom ("Hamam") connected to a drainage system. House 1 has its hamam included in the building itself and placed in the east.

House 2 is smaller, with its hamam added separately to the back of the house in the south-east. While the entrance area is also accessible over several steps, there is no decoration around the door. The plain outside of house 2 is, unlike house 1, contrasted by its interior design. There are many niches for display and storage purposes in the walls, covering all sides of the interior.

Especially during the hot summer months people from all along the coastline used to work and live in the shady oasis of Ras al-Khaimah, where they looked after their palm gardens and irrigation systems.

The majority lived in mud brick buildings and palm houses ("Areesh"), while only richer families could afford to build themselves summer houses from stones. Very few have survived, like the two old summer houses in Shimal, which still give an important insight into the traditions of the past.



Plan of house 2