

## Into the desert

Egypt

*Gift of the Nile*



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## General info

the sinai

It's possible to explore the desert and visit the Bedouins on a Jeep safari. Or what about taking a ride on a Camel trip into the desert? Here's your chance to learn about the Bedouins and gain information about Camel trips and even to do a Camel-riding course. All this can be booked on location from 1-day trips up to several days.

## THE ABABDA: BEDOUINS OF THE EASTERN DESSERT

The home of the Ababda is the vast expanse of the Eastern Desert between the Red Sea and the Nile Valley, a region covering the land from Kosseir in the north down to the southern borders of Egypt. From time immemorial the Ababda have been **nomads**, wandering through the desert with their flocks of sheep and goats. They were always on the move, looking for water and food for their animals.



They have **no permanent settlements**; they live in shoddily assembled wooden shelters, which they simply leave behind when they move on, building new ones at the next place. In the past they made all the items for their everyday life themselves: pots and dishes and **simple tools made of stone and wood, baskets woven from the roots of desert plants, harnesses and saddles for the camels.**

The women would gather herbs to cure illnesses and **spin wool**, which they then wove into coarse fabrics with simple patterns **to cover the walls of their shelters**.

As a result of their life in the desert the Ababda developed features, which are common to all nomad people: indifference toward material things, hospitality, respect for nature, self-sufficiency and tribal solidarity.

**The Ababda have inhabited this region since time immemorial.** They witnessed the rise and decline of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Turks and Franks who passed through.



Treated as robbers and barbarians, the Ababda were expelled outside the borders of the invaders. Excluded from the invaders' cultures, **they** managed to **maintain all of their own traditions** and with them an identity which did not change much over the centuries. To a large extent, this continuity was a result of their modest way of life and the harshness of the living conditions to which they were **uniquely** adapted.

## CAMEL TRIPS

If your time or budget is limited, a **Camel trip** from the eastern shore village of Dahab to Ras Abu Galum provides a brief taste of Sinai's splendour. **The trip takes about an hour** and a half one way, more than long enough for those not used to riding camels. Fifty meters to the left of the path, the **craggy mountains** of Sinai rise above the red desert sands; to the right is the **Gulf of Aqaba**, a finger of the Red Sea that extends up to Israel. In some places, the mountains run directly into the water, and the path seems to disappear. If the tide is running high, your sure-footed steed may have to tread over wet reef.

## CAMEL- RIDING SCHOOLS

**This is a project that supports the local Bedouins in Sinai.** The Camel-riding Instructor is a local Bedouin with good knowledge of English. Classes are held on the beach of Habbiba Village a casual environment where our guests can meet with the Bedouins (men, women and children) without being or feeling offended by entering a different culture and way of living.



Length of visit: 8 to 15 days is suggested but classes of any length can be arranged.

8 day tour: 3 day course + 3 day camel trek:

US \$ 465

(around Wadi Samghri Bedouin settlement and Ain Hudra)

**The concept of the camel riding school aims to bring back business to the local Bedouin community**

Our aim is not only to provide our guests with knowledge about camels, and how to ride and care for a camel. We are offering the opportunity during our camel riding classes **to learn a lot about the traditional Bedouin way of life and survival in a desert** environment, about flora and fauna of the desert.

By the end of the 3 days course you should be able **to ride your own camel** without any help provided, you will be able to **communicate with the camel** and you have learnt the Arabic terms for camel gear and much more.

During the classes a mutual trust has developed between the Bedouins and our guests, which is important for the following camel trek where the guests are part of a journey into a different world.

During normal treks the tourists are **guests of the Bedouins**, taken very good care of but playing more the part of observers. On these 'advanced treks' the guest is an active companion traveller in terms that **you will participate in daily life: collecting wood, cooking on campfire...**

Knowledge gained in the theoretical lessons can be tested and widened. Bedouins will tell and teach how to locate water resources, how to read trails, where to find shelter against certain weather condition, **which**

**plants are eatable and which plants are used for medical treatment for man and animal.** They also learn about the ancient Bedouin law system, which in respect to the hostile desert environment has to be very tough, but turns out to be very just and democratic.

**Ancient stories** told around the campfires during breaks give a perfect insight into the vanishing Bedouin culture. Stories and **songs** tell **about trade, love and law**. The focus on these treks is not so much of coming from A to B, but on meeting with the Bedouins. Enclosed in these tours are always visits to Bedouin settlements in the desert, where life has remained pretty much the same.

The success of these tours depends very much on the interactive participation of the guests.

**The more interest shown, the more questions asked, the more knowledge gained.**