

Bedouin Paths Ltd

Bedouin Lives – Column 4: Saturday 22nd March 2008

"sleeping in the desert ..."

As everyone knows the desert is hot. Very hot. So hot in fact you can sleep in your new pyjamas under the stars and dream warm dreams of riding camels and lush oases. This is true if you go during the summer. Go during the winter and you will sleep, and then carry on sleeping because you will freeze to death due to the cold.

However do not be alarmed. Go hiking with us and we provide lovely warm blankets around a cozy fire. But before there were warm blankets and cosy fires, the Bedouin had a bit of a problem. There they were, stranded miles from the nearest shelter and the sun was going down. And it is January. What to do? First they dig a grave.

Not you understand because they have lost all hope and intend to meet their maker, but because a really good grave will help them survive. The grave is dug the length and width of their body, with the depth deep enough to lie down in with the tip of their nose a couple of inches from the surface.

Then they lie down in it and sweep the surrounding sand over their body, leaving just their face clear to the air. The cold and biting desert wind swirls over their body and sweeps past them and on into the night. The Bedouin then has a nice sound sleep. Personally, I bring a sleeping bag.

Morning breaks and Mr Bedouin desires a warm cup of tea. This requires firewood. Since it is morning, it is light and he can see in the distance some bushes. The bushes are important to the Bedouin, and since they are alive and green, he must not burn them. However beneath the small mound of sand upon which the bush resides, there lies firewood. Specifically the dead roots of another bush. The small group of live bushes have arisen phoenix like from the previous generation. The dead corpses of the bush roots are buried in the sand. So he kneels down and like a dog digging up a lost bone he pushes sand between his legs and uses his hands to burrow away. Dead roots are discovered and then pulled up. The roots are thick and dry and only a few feet of root are required to make a decent cuppa.

Stones are gathered to make the fire surround. They are placed precisely and with long learnt expertise. An old and empty can of long forgotten food serves as the kettle. The exact amount of required water is poured in. The can is pushed against the burning roots and soon the water starts to warm. A few sprigs of mint and leaves are mixed into the warming water from a small pouch attached to the Bedouin's waist. And so breakfast is served.

When we go hiking we have cooks, hot food and a large cake for tea time.



Bedouin Paths runs ethical hiking tours in Sinai and is looking for a Sales & Marketing Manager to be based in Cairo. If you are a fluent Arabic speaker with Sales and Marketing experience, please send your details to jobs@bedouinpaths.com or mark@bedouinpaths.com or go to www.bedouinpaths.com for more information.