

Bedouin Paths Ltd

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"Bedouin and Buses ..."

The Bedouin have a simple attitude to driving speeds. There are only two speeds; full speed or no speed. There is no speed in between; they do not wander around or cruise in a carefree manner around the desert or roads. They do not peruse the landscape with a benevolent eye or take the time to stop and stare. They do not saunter, meander or take the long way around. They go at full blast until they arrive. And then they stop.

They go at full speed completely irrespective of the state of the vehicle. It could be a brand new state of the art Landcruiser or an old jeep than first saw action in the Second World War; either way the car will go at the maximum speed possible. Everywhere. This means that when you are taken through the desert or various rocky parts of the mountains, you prefer the jeep. This way you go at a speed that is below homicidal, purely because the jeep cannot go faster than a running camel. You may be bouncing up and down in the back like a demented demon (due to the large number of rocks and a complete lack of suspension), but at least you have the feeling that you can see what is going on outside.

Therefore the matter of driving a minibus for your customers from Dahab on the coast to St Katherine is a delicate matter. You want to give the Bedouin the business; you want them to supply the minibus and the driver. What you also want them to do is not provide the customers inside with a heart attack as they take each corner on the road by the racing line, especially if it is a blind corner.

Subtle conversations are initiated. Casual comments are made about safety and how the customer feels. Connections between happy customers and paying customers are promoted. If they like the journey then they might do it again, or tell their friends. This way more business is made; for the Bedouin. The reasoning sinks in slowly and a deal is done.

The Bedouin Bus will go from Dahab to St Katherine twice every day, and strict rules apply with regard to driving speeds, racing lines and blind corners. The first Bus leaves and they all arrive safely, with no heart stopping moments on the way.

After a few days of this, the Bedouin enquire whether they can use the Bus for other purposes. What other purposes I enquire? They suggest using it as a private taxi, or for picking up their mum and/or using it as a general purpose goods vehicle. I ask them how will the customers feel if they buy the Bus ticket, get up early, go to the pick-up point on time (8am) to get the Bus from Dahab and then they find out it has been used to take someone's mother shopping? There is a silence and a look of concern on their faces. Hmmm. They think awhile. Maybe the customer can go shopping as well they reply.

It is explained that no, a Bus has to leave at the same time every day and cannot be used for other things. This is accepted and off they go; at full speed.

Bedouin Paths runs ethical hiking tours out of their Bedouin Camp in St. Katherine in Sinai. Contact mark at mark@bedouinpaths.com or call the Bedouin Camp on +20 189662010 or go to the website at www.bedouinpaths.com .