

DNHG visit to Al Dhafra Camel Festival in Liwa

DNHG is organizing a weekend visit to Al Dhafra Camel festival in Liwa (Madinat Zayed) from Fri 22 to Sat 23 December.

The journey takes about 4 hrs one way and so this will be a two-day camping trip. [We will start on Friday 22 early morning and return on Saturday late evening.](#) (You can stay longer or leave any time you wish). All the hotels in the area are already fully booked and the desert will be crowded with the camps and tents of Bedouins participating at the festival. The space is limited and strictly managed and the organizers will assign us a place in the desert for camping.

There will be a lot of different activities to follow and the agenda will be eventually published, but the atmosphere is usually very relaxed and timings are not strictly respected. It is more about the atmosphere, observing the Bedouin culture, enjoying the hospitality, mingling with the Bedouins and celebrating their wins.

Due to the logistics, we can only take approx. 10 people. 4WD will be needed for the desert tracks. To participate you have to be a self-sufficient camper - with your own camping gear, food, wood, water, etc. Food and drinks can be bought at the festival. There are two souqs with traditional ware and local food as well as some excellent Bedouin camping accessories - including sheep coats for chilly desert nights.

You also have to be flexible about the agenda and daily activities - we will take it as it comes and you will be free to visit the events that interest you.

Al Dhafra Festival is the most important meeting of the regional Bedouin tribes and especially famous for camel beauty contests and rich prizes. However, it is usually missed or overlooked by expats as it is overlapping with the Christmas holiday period.

Here below follows more information about the festival:

14-28 December, 2017

MADINAT ZAYED, AL DHAFRA REGION

The greatest showcase of bedouin lifestyle

This is the one festival that embodies the spirit of heritage in this part of the world. If Paris fashion week is undoubtedly the main yearly must go to event for the Haute Couture world, then Al Dhafra festival is the place to be for the lovers and admirers of bedouin life and culture.

This yearly festival that is held under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy commander in chief of the UAE armed forces, is somehow the joining link between the generations in an ever changing social environment, and an occasion to celebrate heritage within the young generation who lives in a globalized society open to the cultures of the world. Weeks before the official opening of the festival in December on the edge of the Empty Quarter desert and its magnificent sand dunes, the caravans of the camel owners, tribes and Sheiks alike, start moving towards Al Dhafra from the many parts of the arabian peninsula, until the breathtaking and almost surreal scene takes full shape on the festival grounds with hundreds of men and women from the many tribes of the region and thousands of only pure bred camels from the Asayel and Majaheem lineage.

The program of the festival includes first and foremost the famous Mazayna, a beauty contest for camels and a celebration of this most beloved animal that played a huge role in sustaining life in these arid lands long before the oil and wealth era.

Visitors of the festival will admire and never forget the cheers and traditional chants of the tribes when celebrating their winning camel while marking the head of the animal with a paste made with the expensive and rare Saffron along with other aromatics.

Alongside the many cultural aspects, the festival constitutes an undisputed venue for huge business deals and multi million dollars camel purchases. That might happen in the open auctions, or in the serenity of the night along the main avenue of the festival, the Charee al Malyoon, or "Avenue of the Million". After all, pure bred race camels are no less expensive than the most sought after horses. Besides Mazayna, the festival program includes many activities and contests, including a photography competition, a popular bazar, Saluki dogs races and falconry shows to name a few.

And here is the report you can find in Jan 2015

Gazelle: http://www.dnhg.org/uploads/4/0/9/9/40998945/gazelle_jan_2015.pdf

If interested, **please contact Sonja at lavson@gmail.com** for more information.