

Please see email below from Sonja Lavrencic, DNHG Field Trip Coordinator.

An invitation to Al Dhafra Camel Festival 2016 (10th edition)

Camel beauty competition and so much more – a true insight into traditional Bedouin life - Al Dhafra Camel festival is probably the best and most authentic Heritage festival in the region and definitely worth visiting. Unfortunately the time of the festival coincides with Christmas holidays when most of expats are away on holidays. However, if you happen to be in the UAE between Dec 13 and 29 do spare a day or two for this festival.

More about festival here: <http://thedesertdiva.com/2016/12/13/al-dhafra-camel-festival-10th-edition-2016/>

The dates – 13th to 29th December 2016

The place – 18 kms south of Madinat Zayed, Western Region – GPS N23.54116 53.78865, or just set tell your Garmin to take you to the Tilal Liwa Hotel and you will pass right through the festival site!

Timings – normally something to see from 8 am through to the evening – can sometimes stray a little from the published schedule

What's to see and do

Camel beauty judging, camel beauty prize giving (do NOT miss), saluki racing, sheep beauty competitions, camel milking competitions, traditional souq, camping shops galore, ATMOSPHERE!

What not to miss

Million Street

Get yourself over here and drive with the locals as they celebrate camel competition wins. Impromptu parades, crazy driving (right and left side of the road), cars getting stuck at the side, camel herders riding their camels glued to their phones, much waving of flags – this is all out with the expat's normal comfort zone but the buzz is infectious and this could well be one of the UAE memories you hold in your heart forever

Dinner/staying at a camp

Last year there was a competition for the best camp and the local families really upped their game and created some amazing Bedouin camps. Drive round them and shout hello, ask if they had any winners that day, how things are etc etc. You might be asked for coffee and if they like you then an invitation may be extended to dinner. In fact dinner might just appear in front of you and you should eat something, it is rude to refuse (though if you have to be somewhere else, mara tania inshallah, next time inshallah, always goes down better than a straight no)

The prize giving

Normally happening at the grandstand around 3.30pm-4pm, and often in the presence of a senior Sheikh, this is a little piece of magic. When the winners are declared there is much cheering and then their family head down to the enclosure where they will often do a yollah dance, waving a huge “key” (to signify the Nissan Patrol they have just won!), while they anoint their camels with saffron (in reality they use turmeric these days).

The atmosphere

Absolutely electric! The mood is invariably upbeat, everyone is friendly and outgoing and their enthusiasm for all things Emirati is infectious!

Check out last year's reports here

<http://thedesertdiva.com/2015/12/21/al-dhafra-camel-festival-2015/>

<http://thedesertdiva.com/2015/12/26/al-dhafra-camel-festival-hospitality-and-glamping/>

<http://thedesertdiva.com/2015/12/23/al-dhafra-camel-festival-photo-diary-23-dec/>

And here is the DNHG report you can find in Jan 2015 Gazelle: http://www.dnhg.org/uploads/4/0/9/9/40998945/gazelle_jan_2015.pdf

If you need local support on the site, do call Ali (050 441 12 69) and identify yourself as DNHG/Sonja's friend. He's one of the guides at the festival and extremely helpful.