

## **Bedouin Paths Ltd**

***Bedouin Lives – Column 3: Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2008***

***"Pay days and pensions ..."***

Life for the Bedouin is not all fun and games. They have to watch over the camels, tend the fire, chat with their neighbours and gossip about the last wedding and how many kilograms of lamb & beef was consumed. That's how you measure the quality of the wedding; the size of the bar-b-que. The last one I attended had over 500 kilograms of meat and much discussion was had over the price of the meat (20 – 35 EGP per Kg), the amount of meat (over 500 Kg) and the number of couples (5). The husbands attended, the brides didn't; but that's another story.

Point is, how long would it take Mr Bedouin to earn enough for his Son's wedding? That's how they think. If they need money then they go and earn it and if they don't need money then they don't. So you have just employed one to be your Mountain Guide; there you are handing out his payment and casually enquiring about the next hike you need him on and what happens? He is not available. He is not available because he now has money and so he needs to spend it. Once he has spent it, then he will need some more. Meanwhile, you need another Mountain Guide.

Long term financial planning is not a Bedouin strong point and anything past next Tuesday is so far away as to be unlikely to happen, and anyway since Allah decides what will and will not happen there is no point in worrying about it. So case closed.

So Mr Bedouin takes his earnings and goes off and spends it on himself and his family. All of it. Then he has no money so he calls up and asks about the next hiking trip. And this continues pretty much indefinitely. But the advent of the modern world has brought about costs that are continuous, rather than one-off purchases such as clothes. Mobile phones need topping up, his car needs petrol and his children have an insatiable appetite for sweets, the internet and all manner of consumables. This means he now needs constant income rather than as-and-when income.

And the problem is of course that when he is too old to be a Mountain Guide he will still have his outgoings to cater for; wife to feed, children to spoil, camels to race and mobile calls to be made. So maybe he now needs a pension plan. But before hordes of pension selling salesmen descend on Katreen and get out their forms to be signed, think awhile. When it comes to the end of the month and his Egyptian pounds are clasped in his hand, what do you think takes preference; his mobile top-up card so he can gossip to his friends; or his pension account? Exactly.

And so he is now torn between his roots of camel tending, sky gazing and gossiping; and the demand for a proper job. Since he is a Bedouin, he will do what all Bedouins do in such dilemmas; and sit down to a nice cup of tea and think it through. And then have a gossip. Then check the camels. Light the fire. Look at the sky ...



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](mailto:jobs@bedouinpaths.com) or [mark@bedouinpaths.com](mailto:mark@bedouinpaths.com) or go to [www.bedouinpaths.com](http://www.bedouinpaths.com) for more information.