

Bedouin Paths Ltd

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"dangerous daughters..."

Everyone is very excited. My daughters will be arriving in St. Katherine in a few weeks for their first ever visit. Their father (me) is nervous because I have never before tried to control 4 teenage ladies (two aged fourteen and two aged fifteen; two of whom are my daughters friends) in an environment where there is no telly, no shopping malls and no night life to speak of. At all. This is a place where the locals get excited if a donkey falls over.

Saleh my camp manager is sanguine about the whole affair. Why should you be worried Mr Mark he says. We have the beautiful mountains, wonderful gardens, they will be overjoyed. Hmmm.

We are putting in a new Bedouin tent in the guesthouse for the little darlings as well as re-painting the rooms and putting in new beds and brand new linen. Will this be enough? They (the daughters) have enquired about what party clothes to bring, what are the beaches like and whether the locals are friendly. I mentioned hiking boots and a decent fleece. There was a silence on the phone. What could dad be referring to? And what is hiking anyway?

I have led them to believe that all will be sunshine and relaxation as per their usual holidays on the beaches of Europe. I just forgot to mention the 8,000 foot mountains, the ravines and wadis, the sleeping on bare earth and rock; not to mention the wonderful outdoor, fully air-conditioned, toilets. And that's before they realize that the big smelly creature accompanying us is a camel and that they will be sharing said creature for quite a few days.

I might possibly have forgotten to mention that strange men with weird headgear will be joining us; cooking our food and helping us along the way. They will speak a strange tongue, go off at various times to pray to their god, bound around the mountains like goats; and talk non-stop. At least they will have something in common.

Then I remember that a change is a good as a rest. They will breathe fresh air, look in wonder at the landscape, and forget about shopping. Especially the shopping. I have come to the conclusion that I will actually save huge amounts of money by letting my daughters spend time with the Bedouin than by letting them enjoy the souks and the coastal hotels. When their friends parents asked somewhat timidly how safe their children would be with the men of the mountain; I smiled a warm smile and explained that they would be a lot safer than if they were surrounded by a bunch of English lads!

Meanwhile Saleh's father has enquired how many daughters I have. I mention three (the youngest is not coming). He then enquires whether I would like any more? And do I want to get married again? If so he can introduce me to which Bedouin ladies are presently available.

It is further explained that since we are in business together it makes sense to come together as a family as well. Makes perfect sense to him. It's the Bedouin way of doing business. Tell me, I say to him, what's the going rate for a daughter these days? I am thinking of selling.

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 .