

# One Arabian Night – The Camel Tow

*Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, India - January 25, 2008*

Amy:

We were picked up by a driver who drove us about 40 minutes outside of Jaisalmer through the desert to the “Rajasthan Desert Camp” compound, which was a large concrete building with a large rectangle of tents . We were shown to our tent, which was



morning



Inside the Desert Tent

a big room & bathroom = luxurious! We had no idea that the camel riders had it so good. We had a beautiful bed, running water in the bathroom, complete with sink, mirror, bucket bath, and electricity throughout the tent (I was lamenting the fact I had lost my flashlight on the train). We dropped off our bags, then walked to the end of the “camp” where we saw people getting on camels. We hoisted ourselves onto the camel and were led by a guide, Magit, who walked with us, leading the camel into the desert to the Sam Sand Dunes. Magit had the same haircut as Brent—very stylish. Our camel’s name was Lucky; his haircut wasn’t bad either (it’s hard to work with such coarse hair).



luxurious tent bathroom

We were the last of about 20 camels, from many different groups, so we walked fast to catch up. The camel saddle looked like two long wooden poles with a saddle fastened on top, with two seats and lots of blankets. I think we were sitting on the camels hump, but there were so many blankets that it was difficult to



Caravan is on its way



View out the windshield

tell... Magit led the camel along by its nose, using two ropes attached to a thin stick pierced through its nose. (BTW, nose piercing is popular here among the people too, but usually just through one nostril.)

Later in the ride, Magit asked me if we wanted to run, to which I responded “NO!” Our guide in Jaipur had told us that he ran through the desert on a camel and it was scary. Plus, inflexible Brent was already uncomfortable on the camel, and I wanted him to be able to walk upright for at least the rest of the trip. The landscape turned from sandy patches with vegetation to sand dunes. The poor camel walked up and down, somewhat laboriously. We stopped once to pet the camel and walk around, and let out a “Arrrrgh” sound when he knelt down. Magit told us that this is the sound that camels

make (it wasn't our fault). I asked about the spitting and was told that only big camels spit and even then, not too often. The camel looked exactly like a giraffe – the same head and long legs – and had very course hair, not what I had expected.

While on the dunes, we watched a dancing show (with five men and dancing JonBenet girls all made up).



Brent and Amy on Lucky, the camel

We then opened up a temporary bank: some of the tourists were tipping in dollars, which weren't much good so far from any city, so we exchanged rupees for them until we ran



Little Jon Benets

out. They wanted 50 rupees per dollar but we explained about the current economic situation and dollar not being as strong as it used to be, vis a vis deficits, trade imbalance, sub-prime mortgage defaults, falling market rates, and overall weak economic forecasts.

(thanks, Brent) Some man in a turban offered to sell us beer and soda, frequently, but we declined, frequently.



who is behind those glasses?

We walked around the dunes, on and off the camel, and watched the sunset. Very peaceful.

After the sun set, the weather became much colder and we headed back to

our camp. We dismounted the camel (we'd become pros at getting on and off the camel) and went back to our tent to change for dinner.



Sunset

The camel "safari" wasn't nearly as long as we had expected (they make them look much much longer in the movie), but, much as we enjoyed it, we were glad it wasn't longer.



Is this my tent?

Dinner was served in the large open-air cement building.

We walked in to find two rows of chairs and tables with dancers in the middle. There was a group of five male musicians and two dancers, who danced for us for many hours. We sat down on the chairs and our drink orders were taken – hot (English) tea. (drinks weren't included



Teatime

in the package). We were given tomato soup and we watched the performance. The

dancers were very impressive and danced on glasses, then on broken glass (ouch!). At one point, all the lights were turned off, and we could see the stars bright in the sky. The



Video  
Rhythm of the Night

dancers put coals from a fire onto a hand scale, and danced around, twirling the hot coals in the darkness. That was our favorite dance.

We met a family from Nova Scotia, who were originally from Punjab. The woman looked like Posh Spice, and we talked to them for a long time while eating dinner and watching the show. They were in India for a wedding, then traveling with friends in Rajasthan. When the show started, there was a group of lively Germans (they'd been drinking lots of alcohol on the camel trek, then more at dinner) who got up and danced with the dancers before being ushered out to their tour bus. Brent and I danced with them, as well, but after the other "foreigners" had left (foreigners!) After the German bus left we were the only non-Indian people there. We were surprised by this, but were told that the camel safari and camp is a popular attraction all over India.



The food was typical spicy India buffet fare except for something they called "desert beans" which looked just like flaked beef brisket so we asked again and they said "desert beans". It was excellent and tasted like beans, not meat. The one non-veg item was a chicken dish and I was given the neck (gross). J

After the show, we went back to our tent and got ready for bed. The tent was cold and we were debating asking for more blankets, when we heard someone outside saying "blankets, blankets!". We were given a nice warm blanket and fell right asleep.



In the morning, Brent went for a sunrise walk through the desert (his favorite place) while I slept. After a while, someone brought breakfast to our tent: egg omelet, toast, jam, butter, coffee and Indian chai. Here, they call chai "masala chai". It's delicious! I'm going to try to make it at home. The butter that we've had in India has been much better than at home, tastier, probably less healthy, but delicious! Maybe I'll try to bring some back...



At 9:00 we walked to the parking lot and met our driver, who drove us to Jaisalmer.

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