



# Booking Information

## Our experience

Wind Sand & Stars are leading specialists in high quality historical and spiritual journeys to the beautiful desert and mountains of South Sinai. Our local partnerships developed over the last 25 years enable us to offer a distinctive and personal experience. We travel at a pace that allows us to connect with the landscape, its people and traditions. Whether you seek a solo venture, a small group retreat, or a unique experience for families and friends, Wind Sand & Stars has the expertise to arrange a journey tailored to you and your group. We are specialists in helping those who have never ventured into this type of environment before, as well as offering unusual opportunities for seasoned travellers.

We travel with our longstanding friends in the local Bedouin communities, which means we can organise activities no other company can - camel treks through beautiful and remote sandstone valleys, walks along hidden mountain paths and visits to ancient historical sites, with evenings around the campfire under a magnificent starlit sky. All of these combine to create a truly memorable experience:

"This was one of the most memorable trips I have ever experienced and it will remain one of my life's special highlights and a lasting wonderful memory!"

*Carol Padgham,  
St Catherine Retreat 2018*

"The whole trip was AMAZING - thank you so much."

*Francis Burkitt,  
Tailor Made visit to St Catherine 2017*

"It was more than I could wish for ... I was inspired, challenged and guided to explore my own silence. The leader was uplifting and kind, with a clear focus on everyone's safety and wellbeing."

*Marleen Hanssen,  
Adventure into Silence 2017*

"A great experience altogether and I am grateful to the guides and drivers, to all the staff at guesthouse and hotels, to the Bedouin we visited; all contributed to a perfect trip."

*Verena Watson,  
Tailor Made Desert Journey 2016*



wind sand stars

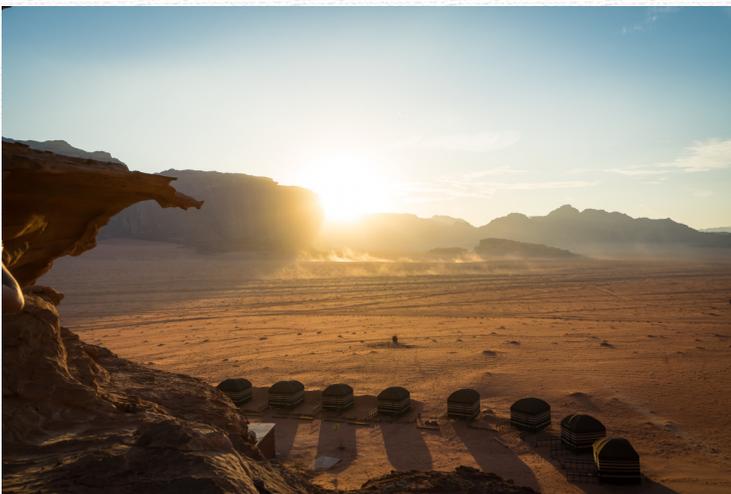
## South Sinai - an introduction

South Sinai is a unique and diverse land of incredible natural beauty. Within a short distance there is an astonishing variety of scenery, from beautiful weathered sandstone canyons, open sandy wadis and spectacular sand dunes, to lush green oases. Inland are Sinai's incredible rugged mountains, with soaring granite peaks, hidden orchards and mountain pools. Travelling through South Sinai you are walking in the footsteps of history, following ancient caravan routes and desert trails that have been established over the centuries. With its strategic position linking Africa and Asia, the Egyptian pharaohs, Alexander the Great, Romans and Crusaders, as well as countless traders and pilgrims, have all travelled through Sinai and left their mark.

It is an area of immense spiritual significance, famous for its Old Testament associations, described in the story of the Exodus, including when Moses climbed Mount Sinai and brought down the Ten Commandments. Christian monasticism also has its origins here, when early Christians fleeing persecution throughout the Middle East sought safety in remote desert wilderness areas. Spiritual leaders became known as the Desert Fathers as a reference to their many words of wisdom that have been handed down through the generations. Many small hermitages and chapels were established during this period, the most famous being St Catherine's Monastery, the world's oldest continuously inhabited monastery and one of the treasure houses of early Christian manuscripts and art.

The people of South Sinai are made up of several Bedouin tribes, mostly descended from people of the Arabian peninsula. One exception is the Jebeliya tribe who live around St Catherine's Monastery, whose origins can be traced to Macedonia, from where families were sent by the Roman Emperor Justinian to aid the building and running of the Monastery. Traditionally semi-nomadic, the lifestyle of these Bedouin is in a state of flux; traditionally water, camel and goat herding dictated their lives. Modern development and the growth of coastal tourism is changing their traditional livelihood.

The best way to experience Sinai is with the Bedouin. It is a privilege to travel with them through their desert lands and learn something about their way of life.





# Practical Information for journeys to South Sinai

We want you to get the very most from your journey. This information will guide you through the booking process and explains our support and back-up so that you can travel with confidence in the experience of our ground handlers and our utmost care for your safety and well being.

## Booking

Once you have decided which journey you would like to join, please complete the Booking and Medical Form enclosed and send it to us at the address given together with a deposit cheque made payable to Wind Sand & Stars. We require a £300 deposit for each person.

## Payment Arrangements

When we receive your booking and medical form we will send you a Confirmation of Booking. There is then a contract between you and Wind Sand & Stars, which is subject to our terms and conditions. We will send you an invoice with the Confirmation of Booking or, where the journey has a stated minimum number, once a sufficient number has been reached. Full payment is required at least 12 weeks prior to departure, otherwise we reserve the right to cancel with no refund. If you are booking within 12 weeks of departure, full payment should be made with your booking.

## Age and Health

Our journeys are designed to be within the capabilities of anyone who is reasonably fit and healthy. We define this as being able to walk for at least two hours with ease. Some mountain treks will indicate the level of fitness required. We have no age limits and make every effort to ensure that anyone wanting to join a journey is able to do so. To help us ensure the well being of all clients we ask you to complete a confidential Medical Form on the back of the Booking Form, informing us of any existing medical conditions. We cannot confirm bookings until this has been completed. We may wish to ask for further medical information to help us to manage any particular condition whilst in Sinai. If you have any questions or concerns, please call the office.

## Passport

Clients are responsible for ensuring that they have a valid passport which is not due to expire until at least 6 months after your return.

## Vaccinations

It is the responsibility of each client to have the recommended vaccinations. These are currently tetanus, typhoid, polio and hepatitis A (see [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)). You may also wish to consider Hepatitis B, Rabies, TB and diphtheria. Please check with your doctor.



# Practical Information for journeys to South Sinai

## Insurance

Comprehensive travel insurance is mandatory for all travellers with Wind Sand and Stars. You will need to provide proof of cover to the WSS office prior to departure, and we advise taking cover out at the point of booking if you do not hold a suitable annual policy or cover via your bank account for example.

Note: It is important to read the conditions on the insurance certificate so that you are aware of exclusions and ensure that you do not fall within any of the circumstances affecting policy validity, e.g. a new or changing medical condition. Should anything be lost or stolen while travelling, it is essential to inform the local authorities within 24 hours. They will give you a receipt, which the insurance company is likely to ask for. All claims must be notified as soon as possible.

## Egyptian Visa

An Egyptian Visa is required for all arrivals travelling via Cairo. British and EU passport holders can obtain a visa on arrival and the cost is currently USD 25. Some nationalities must apply in advance, full details of all nationalities and requirements are given on the Egyptian Consulate website

<http://www.egyptianconsulate.co.uk/visas.php>. *Applications can be made in person (same day - check the Consulate is open) or by post (1 to 6 weeks).*

## Money

Although everything specified on the itinerary is included in your journey, you may want to bring money for gifts and additional drinks etc. You will be able to buy Bedouin craftwork and there is a bookshop at St. Catherine's Monastery. The local currency is Egyptian Pounds. It is best to exchange sterling in the UK as you may not have the chance to change money in Sinai. Small denomination notes are best. Credit cards are useful for backup, there are some ATMs and credit cards are accepted in most large hotels. If you do need to change money in country, USD are easier to change than sterling.

## Desert Travel

### Group Leaders

Each of our pre-arranged group journeys is accompanied by a Wind Sand & Stars leader and a local English-speaking Egyptian guide. Our leaders have relevant experience and qualifications, including advanced first aid. The leader and guides will share their knowledge and experience of South Sinai, its desert environment, landscape, people and past. The level of support for Tailor Made journeys will be agreed as required for each group and their particular journey. Local guides and travel in South Sinai. The arrangements provided by our in-country agent in Egypt include local guides, drivers, vehicles (4-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruisers, minibuses and coaches) and equipment. The company is owned by a Coptic Christian family with whom we have close business ties.

# Practical Information for journeys to South Sinai

They are very experienced in desert travel and aware of local issues and hazards, having worked in South Sinai with the Bedouin since the early 1980s. We have been working with the Bedouin of South Sinai for many years and we are now old friends with many of the families in the area. They are very hospitable people, always offering our groups a warm welcome. It is a privilege to travel with them through their desert lands.

## **Camel trekking**

For camel trekking, camels are provided and led by local Bedouin who have been working with Wind Sand & Stars groups for many years. Saddles are well padded and there are regular rests. Helmets are not provided.

## **Mountain trekking**

Although we walk along mountain paths, it can be rough and rocky underfoot. The itinerary will indicate the level of walking and average walking hours per day. Mountain treks are accompanied by a local

Bedouin mountain guide with camels to carry all luggage and equipment, except your day pack.

## **Accommodation & facilities**

Each itinerary will specify the accommodation for the journey. In the desert we normally sleep out in the open “under the stars”, the most beautiful way to sleep in South Sinai as the night skies are remarkable. Clients are required to bring their own sleeping bag and mat, water bottle and mug, otherwise all group equipment is provided. Toilet facilities in the desert will range from discreet places to hide behind when on the move (there will be plenty of places), to a portable shelter or tent for privacy in camp. Some itineraries include hotel accommodation on the Red Sea coast or Cairo. At St Catherine’s Monastery Guesthouse accommodation is basic and rooms are generally shared, though single rooms may be possible depending on availability. Requests for single rooms (a supplement is payable) should be included on your Booking Form. Where there are odd numbers of clients on a journey with hotel accommodation, the last clients booking may be required to pay a supplement for a single room.

In the desert we provide two cooked meals and a picnic lunch each day and bottled water for drinking. The food is a mix of local and European, plentiful and hygienically prepared. We cater for vegetarians. For desert journeys clients are required to bring their own water bottle and mug and will be encouraged to drink regularly to avoid risk of dehydration. Wind Sand & Stars cannot provide drinking water in the hotels or on non-desert journeys, this must be purchased by the client.

# Practical Information for journeys to South Sinai

## Personal equipment

We ask that everyone dresses with an awareness of the heat of the sun and with respect for the local tribes people with whom we work. Long trousers are essential, plus sun hats and sturdy shoes for safety. A full personal equipment list will be sent to you with your Confirmation of Booking.

## Special arrangements

*If you are not flying in on the first day of the set itinerary, please let us know how we can contact you in the run up to the trip.*

## Itineraries

Due to the nature of our journeys, changes may be necessary or advisable owing to weather and other local factors. We do our utmost to limit the impact of any changes.

## Destination Safety

Safety is our top priority and we carefully assess the security situation before and during each trip that we run. Wind Sand & Stars has been operating in South Sinai for over 25 years and we have established excellent local knowledge, based on a strong relationship with our ground handler and the local Bedouin tribes. We are in touch with the British Embassy and take note of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice. We recognise that the FCO Travel Advice is there to guide all tourists who may not have the benefit of prior experience or local knowledge. There are occasions that our local assessments within some specific areas of South Sinai differ to the FCO and we would not necessarily cancel a journey based solely on the FCO advice against non-essential travel. Any events are closely monitored. Should a local situation become a concern, Wind Sand & Stars would react as appropriate to ensure the safety of any group, working in collaboration with our ground handlers and the appropriate authorities, keeping all parties informed.

## Journey numbers

These range between 10 and 20 people. For most journeys, the itinerary will state a minimum number. We do reserve the right to cancel a journey due to insufficient numbers, but if that were to happen, we would give at least 12 weeks' notice.



# Destination Safety

Wind Sand & Stars has been operating in the South Sinai region for over 25 years. Safety is our top priority and we would not consider travelling without having confidence in the security and wellbeing of everyone in our care. We carefully assess the security situation before and during each trip that we run, maintaining a professional, cautious and conservative approach.

All Wind Sand & Stars groups travel with our experienced ground handlers, with whom we have been working since the company began. They are well known and respected throughout South Sinai. They employ experienced and trusted local drivers, using licensed tourist vehicles. We have built up extensive local knowledge over many years, based on a strong relationship with the Bedouin communities of South Sinai in whose land we travel. We have been working with the same families throughout our operating history.

As an experienced operator, Wind Sand & Stars is well placed to make an informed judgment on journeys through the South Sinai desert, including the World Heritage Site of St Catherine's Monastery. As well as keeping abreast of local and international news reports, we receive regular updates from our network of reliable contacts on the ground. We have an open dialogue with the British Embassy staff in Cairo and we also take note of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice. We recognise that the FCO Travel Advice is there to guide all tourists who may not have the benefit of prior experience or local knowledge. There are occasions that our local assessments of threats to travel within some specific areas of South Sinai differ to that of the FCO and we would not necessarily cancel a journey based solely on the FCO advice against non-essential travel to that particular area.

Should any local situation become a concern, Wind Sand & Stars would react as necessary to ensure the safety of any group, working in collaboration with our ground handlers and the appropriate authorities, keeping all parties informed.

We believe that anyone considering a journey with Wind Sand & Stars should be aware of the local situation so that they are able to make an informed decision. There is a heightened risk of terrorism globally and this includes Egypt, where the FCO considers that terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks.

We strongly recommend that you consult the FCO Travel Advice for Egypt, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/egypt>

Please do not hesitate to contact us prior to booking if you would like to further discuss any aspect of safety.

