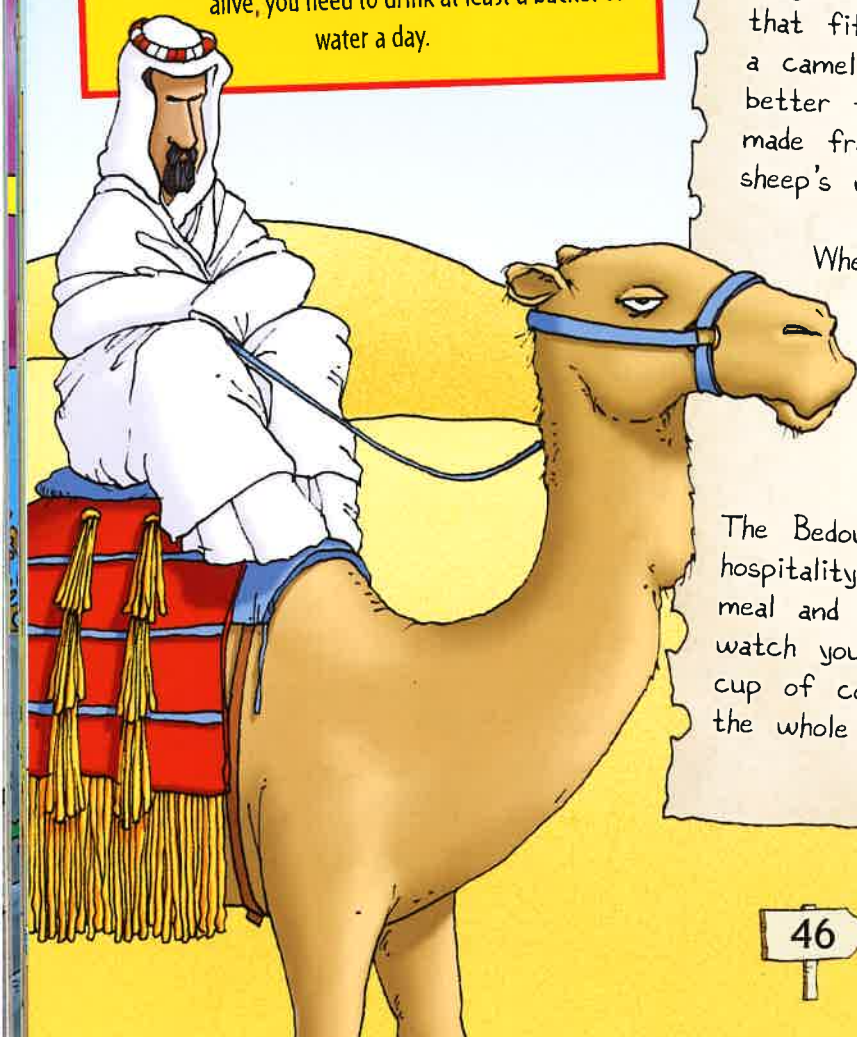


Deserts are such desperate places, it's a wonder anyone lives there at all. But despite the dreadful heat and drought, about 650 million people call deserts home. Hardy, or what? So how on Earth do these desert dwellers handle the harsh conditions? A few years ago, Wanda spent some time with the Bedouin people of the Arabian Desert and found out just how they keep their cool.

HORRIBLE HEALTH WARNING

Surviving in the desert is no picnic. Forget tucking into your sand-wiches. In the desert, food takes second place. You can go for weeks without eating but without water, you'd be dead in two days. To stay alive, you need to drink at least a bucket of water a day.



NOTES FROM MY TRAVELS

by Wanda

THE BEDOUIN

The Bedouin people mainly live in Arabia and North Africa. Their Arabic name is Bedu, which means 'people of the desert'.



The Bedouin are nomads, which means they're constantly on the move. They shift from place to place in search of food and water for themselves and their animals.

With all that moving, they need a home that's easy to put up and take down and that fits neatly on the back of a camel. And what could be better than a nice, snug tent made from camel's hair or sheep's wool?



When it comes to desert dress, the Bedouin know what to wear. And keeping cool's what counts. Their loose, flowing robes are ideal for letting air circulate and their long headdresses keep the sand and sun out.

The Bedouin are famous for their hospitality. They'll always give guests a meal and a place to stay. But watch your manners. Turn down a cup of coffee and you'll offend the whole family.



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It's not just horribly hardy humans who live in the desperate desert. Hundreds of plants and animals have found clever ways of finding water and staying cool. Trouble is, some of them are just too bloomin' clever for their own good. We sent Parky to investigate.

Are you brave enough to get water out of a frog?

A daring desert frog from Australia has an ingenious way of surviving dry spells. It stores water in its body and sits it out underground until it rains. So what on Earth has this freaky frog got to do with you? Imagine you're in the desert and you've run out of water. Ever heard the saying 'getting blood out of a stone'? Well, what about 'getting water out of a frog'? Here's what you have to do:

1 Stamp your feet on the ground. (The frog thinks this sounds like thunder and that it's going to rain.)



2 When the frog croaks, dig it up quickly.



3 Hold the frog over your mouth and give it a good squeeze!



Yes, I know it sounds horribly cruel and heartless, but for local desert people these thirst-quenching frogs are life-savers. If you're going to try this at home, ask the frog's permission first.

WICKED WORLD FACTS

The San people of the Kalahari Desert store water in empty ostrich-egg shells.

French explorer René Caillié was the first European to cross the Sahara in 1828. He nearly didn't make it when he fainted trying to catch his camel.

A one-humped camel's a dromedary. A two-humped camel's a Bactrian.

The desert tortoise pees on its back legs to cool itself down. How pee-culiar is that?

Cacti store water in their stems. Bloomin' marvellous.

NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT A CAMEL. OK, SO THEY'RE TERRIBLY BAD-TEMPERED AND TEND TO SPIT. (THAT'S PROBABLY WHY SOME DESERT PEOPLE USE LAND ROVERS INSTEAD.) BUT THEY'RE BRILLIANTLY ADAPTED TO DESERT LIFE AND CAN WALK MILES WITHOUT WATER OR FOOD. AND IF YOUR CAMEL'S PLAYING UP, TRY THIS BEDOUIN REMEDY. POUR SPIT DOWN ITS NOSE TO GET RID OF THE EVIL SPIRITS.



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