

# TOWARDS THE DESERT LODGE

**NUMBER OF DAYS:** 2

**TREK CATEGORY:** LEISURE TREKS

Our Leisure treks are very accessible, designed with most anyone in mind; anyone that is, who is looking for a bit of exertion along with their vacation. Walking days can be upwards of 6 hours often over mountains and down into valleys. The reward for tired legs are beautiful views, fresh mountain air and the satisfaction of arriving at your destination whether that be a remote ecolodge, an oasis, a walled orchard or your guesthouse in St. Catherine's.

**SUMMARY:** A perfect week-end option, this hike will give you the opportunity to see a lot of what the St. Catherine's region has to offer in a couple days, giving a good sense of what some of our longer hikes are like, because after this excursion, you'll want to be back for more!

	Distance	Vertical Ascent
Day 1	10.89km	823m
Day 2	13.69km	210m
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>24.58km</b>	<b>1033m</b>



Beginning in the quaint town of St. Catherine's the group begins the walk up the 150 year old path leading to the Ottoman Fort of Abbas Himli Pasha. This ruler had the ill fortune of having contracted tuberculosis and was seeking a place in his kingdom with the freshest air possible, hoping it would alleviate him of his ills. The top of the mountain now named after him, standing at 2,383 m. was his choice for a palace. Though he died before the structure was finished, the location he chose is still of interest today as it offers stunning views onto the mountains, plateaus and desert expanses beyond, as well as the small town below. The ruins come to complement the feeling of history these mountains give off. We eat lunch at the top before heading down the steep Valley of Figs – *Wadi Tinya*, and on towards the garden in which we spend our first night. The campsite is set up and food is cooking on the fire as the camelleers have begun preparations before our arrival. Watch them prepare *Fatir* – Bedouin flat bread – or turn your gaze to the starry night above before falling into a deep sleep.

After a hearty breakfast the next morning we follow our guide down a narrow gorge to *Kharazet el Shaq*, one of the last pools still containing water in the high mountain region. The basin is large enough to swim in, and the sun is high enough by now that you will want to cool off! Tea is prepared and served as we relax around the pool, looking down onto the surrounding valleys. A long descent down toward the lush gardens of *Wadi Itlah'* will see us arriving at Dr. Ahmed's garden in time for Lunch. Dr. Ahmed is an herbalist who has studied the mountain plants' medicinal values for years. His garden is beautiful and well tended... we will not want to leave. But, after a couple hours we must continue our walk to arrive to our destination before dark. The next 3 hours take us by the Bedouin settlement of Abu Silla and on to the Windy Crest – *Naqb el Hawa*. This route is one of the first used by pilgrims making their way to the St. Catherine's monastery since the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Portions of the road are still paved in the Byzantine style, surrounded by massive boulders, one can feel the history with each new step. Passing by yet another settlement, we see the tomb of Sheikh Awad, a local holy man buried in a quaint Bedouin cemetery surrounded by towering mountains above before arriving at the Al Karm Ecolodge for a shower and Bedouin feast and time tested hospitality.