

Sheikh Sina Trek Information

Congratulations on booking a place on a Sheikh Sina trek, this info pack should answer many questions that you may have about the trek. If you have any more questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Arrival:

Upon arrival you will know the exact place and time where one of our Sheikh Sina staff will meet you. This will most likely be in the airport. For this reason, please let us know the full details of your flight information as soon as you have booked your travel arrangements so we can meet you there. For those arriving directly to St. Catherine's by bus or private car, we can provide directions to our headquarters.

Sleeping:

We will be sleeping in the mountains under what can only be described as one of the best ceilings you can imagine to have above you. The night sky in the Sinai is unpolluted by light and is ablaze with twinkling stars and distant planets. On your trek you may also have the chance on to stay at the Al Karm ecolodge or one of new ones that are being built. In St. Catherine's, you will be staying in one of the two Bedouin run hostel camps, with a comfortable feel full of Bedouin charm. Remember if you are bringing a sleeping bag for a winter trek, bring a warm one as the nights can be much colder in the mountains than you expect even in the early months of summer.

Water:

When we leave the village to start the trek we will carry mineral water with us, then as we continue the trek we shall refill these bottles with water from wells we pass along the way. Well water is clean, unpolluted and safe to drink. Please let us know however if you are not comfortable drinking well water and we will do our best to make necessary arrangements.

Travel:

We will be using a few different modes of transport while trekking:

1. Camels are a beast of burden and as a result are not of the best temperament so they should not be touched without a guide accompanying you. There will be chances to ride them if the terrain allows.
2. Pick-up trucks will be used at times to cover short distances around the village and from the road to the ecolodge. They are open and children should be kept with their parents and all limbs to be kept inside the vehicle at all times
3. Bus and Taxi. A minibus or taxi will pick you up from the airport and provide other driving needs whilst out here. Always travel with your passport for eventual police checks.

Fridays and Sundays:

The monastery is normally open between 9am and midday. On a Friday it is only open between 11am and midday and it is closed on a Sunday. The monastery may also be closed on other days of religious significance. The visitor's centre in St. Catherine's village and FanSina Bedouin crafts centre are also closed on a Friday.

Insurance:

This is compulsory and will be checked before departure. If you do not have adequate insurance that covers healthcare and trekking and you have an accident, you and your loved ones will have to pay to get you air ambulated home which is very expensive. This is the point of Insurance. We have heard of very simple injuries costing the Insurance Company 15,000 Euro, not nice if you have to pay it yourself.

Various policies are available but whichever one you choose must cover Egypt and all the other activities you intend to do such as trekking, scuba diving etc. If you have any questions phone the insurance company just to be on the safe side.

If you have invalid insurance or insufficient cover **YOU WILL GO AT YOUR OWN RISK.**

Documentation:

You will need a 10-year passport that is valid for no less than 6 months after the end of your trip. It must contain at least one blank page. Make sure your passport is legible, if it has been through the washing machine or the dog has chewed it then getting a visa and entering countries is made more difficult.

Bring documentation to show all vaccinations that you have received.

Bring the certificate to your insurance policy.

Make two photocopies of each document (including visas in your passport, airline tickets, traveller cheque details and insurance certificate, emergency form). We will keep one copy in the office and one copy will be kept by your guide. This greatly speeds up the process of replacing lost originals.

Visas:

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are eligible for an Egyptian Visa. For most nationalities it is possible to acquire a visa at the airport of entry if you have not acquired one already. If you are flying in direct to Sharm el-Sheikh then there are two visas available to you.

- i) Valid for max 2 weeks and is only valid for the Red Sea coast area of the Sinai.
- ii) Valid for mainland Egypt and the Sinai interior. You will need this visa. In 2008 the Visa cost was 15 US dollars or £10. This will need to be paid in hard currency on arrival at the airport.

- Please get the full Egyptian visa as you will be trekking in Sinai’s Interior!
- If on arrival you have a problem getting the full Egyptian visa then tell them you intend to travel to Cairo.

Health and vaccinations:

Below is a list of immunisation recommendations.

(This information was taken from the TRAVAX database shown in the magazine PULSE, from the October '03 edition. I am not a doctor, and you should still always talk to YOUR doctor. (www.travax.scot.nhs.uk ; tel 0044 141 300 1130)

R-Immunisation recommended as risk of infection is substantial.

S-Immunisation sometimes recommended

Country	Typhoid	Hep. A	Diphtheria	T B	Hep. B	Rabies
Egypt	R	R	R	S	S	S

Vaccinations recommended in some circumstances (S) are for more than three visits a year a one stay longer than three months with no high risk activities. You would be recommendable to have the vaccination if staying for a month or longer.

Polio and Tetanus

Tetanus boosters are recommended at 10-year intervals.

General travel health in Africa and many foreign places can be a frightening prospect when considering the list of things that can go wrong. However with a few basic precautions we will take on the trek there should not be any major problems. Much more detailed information on tropical medicine can be found in travel guides (The Lonely Planet has good info) or from your doctor.

There will be an extensive first aid kit on the trek and your guide will be trained in first aid. However if you have any specific medication that you need, please make you sure you bring your own.

Women should note that it is sometimes hard to buy tampons while out on the expedition, so please have a sufficient supply with you.

In the UK there is a specific travel health line for information on anything at free phone 0800 555777.

IF IN DOUBT ASK A DOCTORS ADVICE.

Packing List:

The following is a suggested list of things to bring. Most people will have their own preferences of what to travel with, some prefer more, some less. If you have any questions on equipment then please contact us. Many of you will have the following. We recommend that you do not spend a fortune on new gear as cheap local equivalents can often be obtained. Certain items such as a sun hat and sandals more than pay for themselves in usefulness.

If you do not take extra good care of something then the desert life will probably degrade it to a level of needing to replace it (this includes yourself). Try not to bring family heirlooms.

- 1 **Watch/alarm-** It's nice to know what the day is, but remember it may be even nicer to lose track of time.
- 2 **Walking boots** - The ground is rough and broken so be prepared for rough walking, a non-leather pair of shoes with ankle support is the best.
- 3 **Sandals/flip flops-** These are a must. Most people wear them 50% of the time and are ideal for the heat, and around camp. For rough approaches we advise to use closed shoes and trainers.
- 4 **Socks** - Whatever you normally use back home.
- 5 **Long trousers** - Light weight to wear on the hot days and to hide from mosquitoes.
- 6 **Shorts-** If you chose to wear shorts we ask the ladies to please keep shorts to the knee in respect towards our hosts.
- 7 **Fleece/Sweater-**Always nice to have. It will be windy and cool in the evenings, although too hot to wear during the day in the summer.
- 8 **Cold weather gear-**This will be necessary for the evening, as it does get windy. Warm hats are also

advised.

- 9 **Hat**-For sun protection. This is essential
- 10 **Towel** or sarong.
- 11 **Sunglasses**- You don't need expensive ones but make sure that they are UV protective as you will spend a lot of time outdoors in the sun.
- 12 **Swimwear** - Especially if you are doing one of our beach treks or you may be lucky to find water pools in the mountains.
- 13 **Underwear**- Each to their own.
- 14 **Wash bag**- What you use at home. Bring some wet wipes, as we will be in places impossible to wash with water.
- 15 **Torch and batteries**. The new LED head lamps are great. The batteries abroad are not always the best and we always recommend rechargeable.
- 16 **Sleeping Bag**-A 3+ season bag is most useful. It is easy to make a warm sleeping bag cooler, but a lot harder to keep warm in a cool one. Get a 2 season bag if coming here in the summer months.
- 17 **Sleeping bag liner**-These are essential especially in hot climates where any type of sleeping bag is too warm.
- 18 **Pen knife**-Very good idea to bring one.
- 19 **Sunscreen** and Total Block. NO tanning lotion!! Believe us, you will tan even by wearing factor 30.
- 20 **Insect Repellent**-One containing 30% DEET is good. We will have mosquitoes when staying in St. Catherine's village and in the mountain gardens. A Mosquito net is useful.
- 21 **Camera, film and batteries**. If you use a digital camera then bring a charger plug adapter to use in St. Catherine's village. Also bring a ziplock bag to protect your camera even while taking pictures as fine sand will quickly ruin it.
- 22 **Four passport photos**.
- 23 **Batteries**-As already mentioned most batteries bought abroad are terrible, so bring a supply along.
- 24 **Books** -Bring one or two and once finished can be rotated around the rest of the team.

To store all this in a rucksack is fine, a better idea though is a large bag (60 litre +) that is cheaper and will fit onto camels better. Also bring a smaller (30 litre) day pack for water, snacks, camera etc. while you walk.

If you have other kit that you will like to take with you, but are unsure if you should bring it feel free to email us.

Always take half as much luggage and twice as much money as you think you will need.

If in doubt leave it out.

Meals, cooking and food:

You will be amazed how well you can eat whilst out trekking in the mountains and desert. As camels will carry your food there is no excuse to eat poorly. Often breakfast is a wide spread of delights with freshly made bread either buried in the fire or cooked above the flames. Lunch will be eaten under the shade of a tree and will be a cold lunch but with copious amounts of tea flavoured with desert herbs. The evening meal will be a feast of local cuisine able to fill the hungriest of trekker's bellies. This is the time to inform the Sheikh Sina team if you have any dietary requirements.

All cooking equipment including stoves, pots, etc. for communal cooking are provided along with plates, cups and cutlery. The guide will either be cooking on gas or on fires made with wood brought into the campsite on camels sourced from farmed wood.

Climate:

Sinai's weather is easy to summarize: it is hot and dry. However, there are significant differences in temperature between day and night. Considering some mountains are over 2.000 meters high, the temperature might sometimes vary more than 30°C between day and night. March-April as well as September-October are the most pleasant times for traveling, but enjoyable treks are possible in all seasons. In spring there is a clearer sky, more vegetation and more water will be found in the oases. Despite very warm and sunny weather throughout the whole year, in the desert it becomes cold, especially in winter times (November-February). In higher areas it may even snow (e.g. St. Catherine), but only in the months of December to February. The summer is hot. However, for those who can cope with heat better than with cold, traveling to Sinai in summer time is still recommendable because there is hardly any humidity. The Table below gives you an idea of temperature variations.

Dahab	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max	22.8	24.6	23.9	28.1	31.8	36.2	37.4	37.1	33.2	30.0	26.7	21.9
Min	12.2	12.5	12.2	16.7	23.0	25.0	26.0	25.8	25.1	21.2	17.6	14.7
Sea	21	20	21	22	24	25	26	28	29	27	25	23

Saint Catherine	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max	16.1	18.1	17.3	23.1	29.1	31.3	32.4	32.7	30.5	24.8	21.9	15.1
Min	1.9	4.2	5.3	8.3	14.0	16.3	18.2	20.2	17.7	12.8	9.5	6.1

Money matters:

There is a bank in St. Catherine's village that is open in the morning and the evening where it is possible to change hard currency (cash). It does not have an ATM though. The closest ATM is at the Monastery although sometimes it is out of service. It is best to come with all the cash that you need for your full stay in St Catherine's. The exchange rates you get back home will be a lot worse than the ones you get in Egypt.

The exchange rates in Egypt at the time of writing is

- £1 – 10.5LE
- \$1 – 5.4LE
- €1 – 8.3LE

Language:

St. Catherine's village has had a lot of influence from the tourist trade and as a result most inhabitants have an understanding of the English language. This does not mean that it is not worth learning any polite phrases in Arabic. You do not have to travel far before all locals speak only Arabic. You will gain a lot more respect if you greet people correctly.

Shopping:

There is a wealth of crafts and artefacts to buy in St. Catherine. Desert herbs and dried fruit from Mahmoud Mansour's shop, Bedouin handicrafts produced by Bedouin women at FanSina, locally crafted brass and copper jewellery, as well as other Egyptian souvenirs to be found in the local tourist stores.

E-mail and Phones:

St. Catherine's village has internet access and mobile reception. Although while on the trek there will be no need for your phone as reception is very limited.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us, we are happy to answer any other questions you might have.

We look forward to having you!