

SINAI

This Handbook contains everything you need to know about this epic Secret Compass expedition to [traverse Egypt's southern Sinai desert](#) in minimalist style.

Read on to discover our ethos and team-centred approach and for the nitty gritty like flight and visa advice, insurance requirements and kit recommendations.

Use the buttons below to ask questions or if this handbook answers all of your questions you can request a space on the team by completing the [booking form](#) and submitting a deposit (bound by our [T&Cs](#)).

We will then be in touch by phone or email to hopefully approve your place on the team!

Upcoming Expedition Dates

- 18 September to 3 October 2021.

Key Facts

- Arrive: by 1500 on Day 1 into Sharm el Sheikh airport.
- Depart: leave Dahab any time from Day 16 onwards.
- Insurance: ensure you have comprehensive cover.
- Docs: send your flight, insurance and passport copy in.
- Balance due: 90 days before departure.
- Find [FAQ](#) and [Testimonials](#) online.

Overview

Aim

The primary goal of this ~230km, camel-supported desert traverse is to cross the southern Sinai, getting back to basics in a nomadic, live-like-a-local manner.

Summary

This culturally immersive journey is minimalist in style, in efforts to foster a deeper connection with the vast desert. The team will be supplied with Bedouin cloaks, scarves and sleeping mats, as well as being accompanied by excellent Bedouin guides – true masters of the desert. The secondary, more physical aim of this expedition is to climb several desert peaks including Mount Sinai at 2285m and Mount Catherine at 2629m (Egypt's highest peak).

Highlights

- Trek across southern Sinai between the gulfs of Aqaba and Suez.
- Summit Egypt's highest peak plus other mountains.
- Travel in a nomadic, minimalistic manner.
- Buy food and trade camels with the Bedouin en route.
- Sleep beneath the desert stars.
- As featured in National Geographic online (Feb 2016).

To do

Flights

You need to organise your own international flights. It is advised that you book a flexible flight ticket that can be changed for a fee or refunded if the expedition dates are changed or if it is cancelled for any reason. Read our

[Terms and Conditions](#) online. You need to be in country, bags collected and ready to leave Sharm El Sheikh airport on the team transfer by 1500 on Day 1 of the expedition. Your return flight will also be from Sharm El Sheikh and you are free to depart Dahab any time on the last day of the expedition, Day 16. Please bear in mind the transfer time (1h15) to Sharm el Sheikh airport from Dahab.

Please advise Secret Compass of your flight itinerary before departure. Direct or international flights into Sharm el Sheikh can sometimes be expensive, another option is to fly into Cairo then take an additional domestic flight from Cairo to Sharm el Sheikh with Egypt Air. Note you will need to collect baggage, clear immigration and change terminal if you do this so please leave plenty of time between flights.

Travel Insurance

[Travel Insurance](#) that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all expeditions. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all aspects of a remote expedition and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. Secret Compass cannot comment on the suitability of your cover so if you are in any doubt please contact your policy provider and ask them to confirm that you are covered to our minimum standard (below).

- Emergency medical repatriation (to home country) including any associated expenses abroad: at least \$500,000.
- Activities: ensure that any activities carried out on the expedition are included, these could be trekking, horse riding, rafting, MTB etc.
- Geographical region: check the geographical region you are going to is insured (often the US, Canada and countries like Afghanistan are not insured).
- Foreign Ministry advice: check your insurance is not sensitive to any travel warnings issued by your respective foreign ministry. In the UK, many insurers will not insure you when the Foreign Office warns against travel to this area. Foreign Office advice will not necessarily mean we cancel an expedition or do not travel to a particular area. Please check [@FCOtravel](#) and the [Travel Aware](#) site.
- Dates: make sure the period of cover begins at the departure and ends at the return to your home country. Many flights take a day or two and time zones vary. Insurance companies may prejudice your claims due to this.
- Pre-existing medical conditions: disclose this to your insurance company and to Secret Compass. Prior to travel Secret Compass will require the name of your insurance policy provider, their 24-hour emergency contact number and your policy number.

For more information and links to suggested companies, please visit our [Travel Insurance](#) page.

Visas

Visas are your responsibility. Most nationalities require a visa to visit Egypt. British nationals are able to get a visa on arrival (\$25/£25, the Red Sea Resort visa is NOT sufficient) or you can apply for a visa in advance. Information on companies that can assist with this can be found on the [Get Ready](#) page of our website.

Passports

All expedition members should have a valid passport with at least six months remaining. Please ensure you have at least two spare pages in your passport. Please send a clear, colour copy of your passport to Secret Compass ahead of the expedition and carry photocopies with you on the expedition in a safe place.

Registration with the Embassy

Please register yourself with your respective Embassy or Foreign Office tracking service prior to travel.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Rass Shiatan

Arrive into Sharm El Sheikh Airport by 1500. The team will be met by the expedition leader for a two-hour drive to the Bedouin Beach Camp on the shores of the Red Sea where you will meet your Bedouin guides. Accommodation will be in simple beach huts.

Day 2 – Farsh el Friar

After a full expedition briefing and the chance to leave a small bag of extra items behind, the team will cross the road and enter the Sinai desert. Today will be a short trek of around 7km.

Day 3 to 9 – Sinai Desert

The next seven days will be spent travelling West through the Sinai desert. You can expect early mornings, woken before dawn by the sound of fresh coffee being ground on the fire, before setting off into the cool of the morning. There will be long breaks for lunch during which you will help bake bread, make baba ganoush and relax in the shade. The afternoon will see the team continuing the trek towards the evening's camp, gathering firewood on the way and looking out for the expedition's camels on the horizon. The terrain varies from soft, sand-filled wadis to slot canyons carved into the sandstone. The exact distances covered each day range from 10km to 30km but will be dictated by the availability of water from wells deep in the desert.

Day 10 – Wadi Arbaen

Today the team will climb Mount Sinai, also known as Mount Moses. There is a good path to the summit but this is a steep, long climb with minimal shade.

Day 11 – Wadi Rotuk

Continuing the trek with another 20km covered today. The expedition will take in Mount Catherine, the highest peak in Egypt, before descending into Wadi Rotuk and the quiet of the desert.

Day 12 – Zaiwateen

Continuing the trek through the Sinai desert for another 13km as you approach the western shore of the peninsula.

Day 13 – Wadi Rimhan

Start today with a 'Grade 1' scramble to the summit of Mount Umm Shaumer, an impressive peak offering views back over the trekking route and towards the Gulf of Suez, before descending and continuing the trek.

Day 14 – Wadi Isla bottom

A long day today covering almost 30km as the team passes lush oases and finally leaves the mountains for the desert plain stretching to the Gulf of Suez. Enjoy a final night around the campfire with your Bedouin guides and camel drivers.

Day 15 – Dahab

An early start to meet the minibus for the drive to Dahab, arriving in time for lunch. Check into your comfortable hotel and relax, swim, eat seafood and enjoy a final team celebration.

Day 16 – departure day from Sharm el Sheikh

The expedition officially ends after breakfast today but you are free to depart Dahab anytime or extend your stay. Please factor in transfer times (1hr15) to Sharm El Sheikh. Airport transfers are not included but are easy to

arrange and cost around \$25.

A Note on Secret Compass Itineraries

Please remember that this itinerary acts as a framework plan. It provides guidance as to our intentions but may not be followed to the letter. This is an adventure and by definition the outcome is uncertain. The leadership team may flex and change the plan depending on numerous frictions encountered en route. An adaptable, team-centred approach is required.

Prepare

Fitness

All our expeditions are achievable by people with an active and healthy lifestyle. However, this is an arduous expedition that will test you and at times you will be sore, tired, hungry and possibly wet (yes, even in the Sinai!). You must be prepared physically and mentally for the expedition and for living in basic conditions for the duration. Please ensure that you train for the expedition and arrive fit and ready to go. You will be required to be fit enough for the following.

- Expedition [Grade](#): 270°.
- Daily activity: up to eight hours with long lunch breaks.
- Trek: up to 30km a day.
- Carry: daily food supplies, water, camera and sun cream.
- Terrain: rough, varied, undulating desert terrain, on Grade 1 scrambles to some summits
- Climate: approx 30°C to 40°C. An extremely hot, arid desert climate. Up to 10°C cooler at night and at height.
- Altitude: up to 2629m (Mount Catherine).

Throughout this expedition, the terrain and climate will have the largest impact on the team. You won't carry much weight on your backs, but the limited amount of water and food and the lack of the normal luxuries you might be accustomed may stress you more than expected. If you would like to speak to us about the fitness requirements or training plans, please get in touch. Our generic [Expedition Training Advice](#) can be downloaded here and adapted to suit.

Previous Experience

You'll benefit from previous multi-day trekking or walking experience. Though not carrying large expedition packs, the consecutive days of activity in a desert environment and a very different way of living and eating will make this a challenging expedition.

Medical

Vaccinations. Please seek advice from your health professional on recommended vaccinations. The NHS website [Fit for Travel](#) and [Travel Health Pro](#) are useful.

Dental. It is strongly recommended that you have a dental check up prior to departure. Dental problems far from help are very unpleasant.

Money

Egyptian Pound (LE or E£) is the currency of Sinai. There will be access to ATMs at Sharm El Sheikh Airport and in Dahab but be very aware that these are often broken so plan your currency in advance. During the expedition there will be nothing. This expedition is all inclusive so you won't need much money, except for tipping (discretionary,

budget on around £60 for the trip) and to buy a beer or two and some souvenirs on the way.

Kit list

The following is Secret Compass's recommended kit list for our expedition to cross Southern Sinai. This is a minimalist-style expedition and we strongly encourage team members to embrace the back-to-basics Bedouin lifestyle and pack accordingly. Please do not bring any extra items (especially smart phones or other technology) without discussing with Secret Compass first as in the past team mates have found this detrimental to the feel of the expedition. All of your personal kit will need to fit into the provided shoulder bag and your 20-litre dry bag. A small bag with extra items which you won't need during the expedition may be left at the Beach Camp and will be returned to you in Dahab at the end of the expedition.

Secret Compass will supply the below items. Apart from the Bedouin carpet, these are available for you to keep after the expedition or they can be donated to a local community.

- a. Hand-wrapped water bottle. Recycled water bottles wrapped up in traditional palm fibre and cloth.
- b. Farwa – Heavy winter Bedouin cloaks (which will also be our sleeping bags).
- c. Head scarf.
- d. Bedouin carpet.
- e. Woollen shoulder bag.

Secret Compass has arranged team members discounts with Cotswold Outdoor, Nordic Life, Outdoor Hire and Expedition Kit Hire, details of these will be sent through on booking.

Clothing

- WALKING BOOTS/SHOES: Walking boots with ankle support if you prefer, but lighter the better so no heavy leather boots. Ensure your boot is WORN IN and comfortable. Avoid Gore-tex if possible. Read our [Desert Footwear Guide](#).
- 3x MIDWEIGHT HIKING SOCKS: Wool is suggested.
- 1x LONG SLEEVE SHIRT: Thin trekking shirt that dries quickly with long sleeves to provide insect and sun protection.
- 1x TREKKING TROUSERS: Thin trekking trousers that dry quickly and are comfortable. Zip-off legs are a good idea.
- WINDPROOF JACKET: Lightweight windproof. The temperatures will drop to around 10°C and windy in the highlands.
- HAT: Wide brimmed or include neck protection.
- SLEEPING CLOTHES: Same rules of modesty at night as your day clothes, see the On Exped tab.
- SWIMMING SHORTS/COSTUME: To wear whilst washing clothes or showering at wells.
- 1x SET OF SUMMER CLOTHES: (optional) For Dahab after the trek.
- FLIPFLOPS/SANDALS: (optional) For Dahab after the trek.
- TRAVEL CLOTHES: Can be left at the Beach Camp and returned to you in Dahab.

Health and Hygiene

- SUN CREAM: SPF30+ (SPF50 is recommended), P20 or similar is great as it doesn't run off with sweat.
- LIP SALVE WITH SPF: This is essential as chapped lips are painful.
- BIODEGRADABLE SOAP: A concentrate eg. Lifeventure Allpurpose Wash is very compact.
- SANITARY PRODUCTS: Bring ziplok bags for disposing of things in later.
- HAND SANITISER: 50ml bottle.

Small First Aid Kit

A team medical kit with a comprehensive primary care provision will be carried.

- **PERSONAL MEDICATION:** It is worth identifying the generic/chemical name for your medication in case you need to purchase more in-country. Please also check whether your medication is legal in your destination. You must inform Secret Compass of any medical conditions.
- **ZINC OXIDE TAPE:** Leukoplast if possible, and small scissors for blisters. Dave will be bringing his own tested and very comprehensive blister system so do not worry if you are in doubt about what to buy.
- **REHYDRATION SALTS:** 2 tubes of Nuun (or similar) non-caffeinated rehydration salt tablets.

Other

- **SUNGLASSES WITH UV PROTECTION LENSES:** Cat 3 lenses as a minimum, Cat 4 are suggested.
- **HEAD TORCH:** Plus one set of spare batteries.
- **DRY BAG:** 20-litre to put your spare belongings in on the camel. This keeps sand out and also stops them falling out of your bed roll when tied to the camel.
- **KNIFE:** (optional) For helping with food preparation etc.
- **LIGHTER:** For burning loo roll.
- **HEAVY DUTY ZIPLOK BAGS:** (optional) For storing cameras etc to keep sand out.
- **CORD:** (optional) 5m of 6mm cord for carrying firewood, drawing water from wells etc.
- **BOOK:** (optional).
- **CAMERA:** (optional) Separate camera so you do not need to bring a smart phone.

Approach

Our Approach

Secret Compass organises expeditions, not sightseeing tours. Our expeditions are team-centred, flexible and dynamic. Teams are managed on the ground by Secret Compass staff: industry-leading professionals and guides of the highest calibre. They put the structure in place for your team to have an incredible experience while achieving your expedition's aims. Our people are as passionate as you are about achieving the extraordinary in the world's wildest places. Secret Compass teams often go to places that others don't. This makes our expeditions truly different, taking you beneath the skin and beyond the headlines of the world's most remote reaches. Inspired by history's great explorers and challenges, you'll be set ambitious goals and will overcome similar hardships to those experienced on the audacious journeys of the past.

Remember this is not an organised tour. It is an adventure. More often than not expeditions don't run smoothly! The nature of the areas we operate in mean that we will encounter a number of challenges that we expect everyone to meet and relish. Friction and hurdles are all part and parcel of an arduous expedition and also to our success as a team. These make the journey more interesting and are often the best and most amusing parts when looking back. Each expedition is thoroughly reviewed on its return and team members will have the opportunity to provide feedback which helps to inform planning for future expeditions.

Local Partners and Bureaucracy

Our teammates can only achieve the extraordinary with the help of people in the communities we travel through. NGO and aid workers, guides, fixers and interpreters all work extremely hard and are generous in their hospitality to us and our teams: visitors in their land. They are crucial to our success. Please remember and respect that their perspectives and concepts of time, environmental responsibility and customer service might differ to yours. Occasionally there is no established protocol for outside visitors which means we encounter local power struggles or disagreements. Our leaders have years of experience in delicate negotiations like these and conversational chess – especially through an interpreter – and these interchanges are often memorable parts of any expedition.

Infrastructure and Natural Events

The areas we travel to often especially remote. Transport infrastructure can be ageing, inadequate or non-existent. Flooded roads, collapsed bridges, fallen trees and vehicle break-downs are all par for the course. Our teams thrive on overcoming challenges like these – be prepared to get stuck in and push occasionally! Natural phenomena like

desert sand storms, early monsoons, landslides across key routes, winter coming early, gale force winds and driving snow can all make for a more interesting time on the expedition.

Food

In some areas our teams explore, we rely on local food sources. This can often be outstanding (but can also be very average) and we always make the best out of the resources available. In other cases, we will supply filling and high-calorie dehydrated expedition foods (ration packs).

Part of a Team

Secret Compass fosters a team mentality across all its expeditions and projects. Like all teams you will have a leader who will give direction to your progress. Crucial to your team's success – especially when the going gets tough – is the attitude of the teammates working together to achieve the aim. You really are part of a team, not a cosseted guest on a tour. We ask teammates to muck in and help out any aspect of the expedition, from fetching water and helping to prepare and cook food, to carrying some group kit and equipment if required. The working language of all teams is English.

Typical Teammates

There really is no typical expedition member, though everyone needs to be fit, healthy and ready to take on the expedition's aim by the time of departure. Participants range from 21 to 65+ in age and come from all over the world. Backgrounds include contract workers and engineers, IT specialists and students, teachers and literature lovers, journalists and keen photographers and so many more. What bonds our pioneering teams is their shared spirit of adventure and their sense of humour and positive outlook. A good teammate looks on the bright side when the 4x4 breaks down, the rain comes early and when a meal is distinctly pedestrian. Our teammates help each other, look out for each, encourage each other and help each other when needed. Our teams have done us proud in working together to achieve their common goal: the aim of the expedition. If this sounds like you, you've come to the right expedition company.

Teammate Mentality

You need a robust, spirited and can-do attitude to cope with demanding days and rough camping in rugged and wild places. You'll cover good daily distances (generally carrying your own kit and equipment), eating expedition foods or relying on local food sources. These elements combine to create the unique character of each expedition. On expedition, challenges, frictions and changes to plans are inevitable. Teammates should meet and relish these as an integral part of any arduous expedition and its ultimate success. Such things make the journey more interesting and are often most memorable parts when looking back.

Risk Management

Secret Compass is an expedition company not a tour company. Expeditions contain inherent risk. This is part of the appeal for teammates. We do not make expeditions safe as, by definition, that is impossible. We construct and implement a three-staged risk management approach to reduce risk to what we perceive as a tolerable level.

1. Risk assessment.

We conduct a thorough risk assessment of potential hazards and threats that may be encountered on the expedition and provide recommendations to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring/ severity if it does occur.

2. Safety plan.

As part of our expedition plan, we detail actions to be taken to implement and resource the recommendations of the risk assessment. This includes a detailed medical and communications plan.

3. Delivery.

The expedition leader is responsible for dynamic risk management on the expedition itself.

Key Risks

Key risks encountered on this specific expedition include accidents (slips, trips or falls) on uneven terrain, blisters and interactions with pack animals. If you would like to see the full Risk Assessment for this expedition, please email info@secretcompass.com

Incident Management and Medical

As part of the safety plan, Secret Compass has a full incident and emergency plan for medical and other emergencies. This will be discussed in full at the arrival brief, so everyone is aware what action will be taken. In summary, incidences are usually managed on the ground by the expedition leader in the first instance with remote support from Secret Compass's 24 hour Operations Room before evacuation to the nearest appropriate medical centre.

Informed Consent

It is your responsibility to understand the risks associated with adventure travel in remote areas. You also must understand that medical evacuation will take an extended period of time (potentially up to two days) and will require wilderness extraction techniques and long carries by stretcher. In-country search and rescue and emergency services are very basic or non-existent and the expedition will rely on internal resources for medical evacuation. By joining this expedition, you accept the risks associated with the venture. If you require any more information on specific risk management for this expedition, or would like to speak to us about our medical planning prior to the trip, please get in touch.

Testimonials

Read team [Testimonials](#) or watch this short video featuring expedition teammates (filmed on location in Ethiopia) for an insight into life on expedition.

On exped

Bedouin Tribes

Along this route you will be crossing four different tribal areas. It is Bedouin law to employ camels and Bedouin from the tribal area you are walking in. As you pass through each area you'll change the camels and their owners to those of the local tribe. There are slight differences between the various south Sinai tribes and you'll get the chance to meet a wide variety of people.

Clothing

Both men and women should wear loose fitting clothing that covers their knees and shoulders (and cleavage for women). Our guides are very experienced with varying cultures and quite relaxed about dress code but we must respect local customs when we meet local Bedouin. A handy sarong or a big scarf will help women to cover up shoulders etc. quickly when encountering people during the trek. On reaching Dahab, it is a very different picture and you'll see a lot of skin on show.

Respect

In Bedouin culture, showing respect is very important. If someone approaches the group for the first time, everyone should stand for introductions. It is unlikely that they will shake hands with any ladies in the group. When sitting, it is important not to point the soles of your feet at anyone. When passing food, drinks or when eating, don't use your left hand (traditionally your 'toilet hand'), only your right. Further information will be given in the arrival brief and if

you have any questions the expedition leader and local guides would be delighted to share their experiences with you.

Terrain

This expedition will cover all the faces that the southern Sinai desert has to offer.

- Tight sandstone slot canyons.
- Sand dunes.
- Gravel plains and wide, seemingly endless wadis.
- Deep granite canyons.
- Rounded granite domed peaks.
- High mountain tops.
- Oases giving surprising bursts of green and colour.
- Steep scrambles up high jagged peaks.

Weather

The weather during the day will be very hot and dry. The wind will pick up during the periods of sunrise and sun set. The nights will be relatively cool compared to the days. Daytime temperatures will be between 30°C and 40°C with temperatures dropping by 10°C degrees as we walk into the highlands. There may be rain, but we will be lucky to see any, as after all we will be in a desert.

Transport

The areas we travel to are especially remote and transport infrastructure is often ageing, inadequate and sometimes non-existent. Roads flood, bridges collapse, fallen trees and vehicles break down and get stuck. It's all par for the course. Secret Compass teams thrive on the challenge this provides – overcoming it is more rewarding! Be prepared to get stuck in and push occasionally.

Road travel

From Sharm El Sheikh Airport you'll drive straight to the trailhead, a Bedouin camp on the shores of the Red Sea. At the end of the expedition you'll be met by 4WD cars to drive you to the road and then will meet minivans for the drive to Dahab which is approx. 2-3 hours. The expedition ends in Dahab after breakfast but it will be easy for you to arrange taxis to drive back to Sharm El Sheikh (approx. 1h15) to catch flights home. These final transfers are your responsibility.

Other Modes of Transport

The remainder of the journey will be by foot, supported by camels.

Accommodation

Gulf of Aqaba. Your first night will be at a Bedouin camp a couple of hours north of Sharm el Sheikh. The accommodation will be basic bamboo huts on the beach. On the expedition, you'll sleep under the stars. You will be provided with a carpet to sit and sleep on as well as a heavy Bedouin cloak called a Farwa, which you'll use as a sleeping bag for the night. There will be no tents provided. In Dahab at the end of the expedition you'll relax, wash and sleep in a comfortable hotel on the shores of the Red Sea.

Reality of Living Rough for Days

Occasionally people on our expeditions are not prepared for sleeping in such conditions for multiple days. Living in these conditions can degrade your health if you do not look after yourself and can increase fatigue if you are not used to living in this manner. You need to be highly organised so that your night and morning routine is done

efficiently and quickly. If you are inexperienced at camping, it is essential that you get as much practice as possible prior to the expedition.

Food

Most of the produce will be purchased from Bedouin that still use local methods to dry and preserve food, this will include dried meats, fish, locally grown veg, herbs, fruit and cheese. We may also buy goats from local shepherds and cook the meat in the fire. Bread will be plentiful and freshly made (if you want to learn how to make local bread, your guides will be delighted to teach you). Expect plenty of dates and home-made energy mix to keep your legs going during the day. All of the expedition food has already been ordered as it not only has to be dried but first planted, grown and picked.

Dietary Requirements

Please advise Secret Compass in advance of any dietary requirements and bear in mind that, although every effort would be made to accommodate different diets, this may not always be possible due to the minimalist nature of the expedition, in particular those on a gluten-free or vegan diet should consult Secret Compass before booking to discuss options. The coffee we drink will be the traditional green coffee that is roasted and ground around the fire. It is a brave person who declines the offer of coffee from a Bedouin. Black tea and herbal tea (with lots of sugar) are also on offer.

Expedition Leader

Dave Lucas is an experienced Secret Compass leader, Dave has spent over 85 months on expeditions in 85+ countries from Europe and Asia to Africa and Latin America. He thrives on exploring unclimbed areas of the world and has climbed new routes in dozens of countries. To Dave, the climbing is the 'icing on the cake'. The real 'fruit and nut mix' is made from the people you meet, the animals you encounter, the sights you see and the wonderful food you eat. Dave's adventures have been on the National Geographic Channel and on Sky TV; in four books; and in seven magazines. He has been recognised by the Royal Geographic Society (RGS) and has been a fellow of the RGS since his mid-twenties. Dave inspires others by speaking about his adventures at numerous public speaking events. Just one of his many adventures was climbing new routes to explore a ruined inaccessible Ethiopian palace for gold, treasure and legends. Dave lives for adventure and this combined with his professional manner and experience has resulted in his being a very sought after expedition guide.

Bedouin Guides

You'll have two excellent Bedouin Guides throughout the desert crossing, One is from the Tarabin tribe and the other is from the Jebeleya tribe. Their knowledge of the desert is second to none; they understand all the different local cultures and speak excellent English.

Communications

Secret Compass staff will be carrying at least two methods of communication, usually a Satellite Phone and a DeLorme two-way communication device. These will be used for regular updates to head office and for emergencies.

Unfortunately, routine communication between team members and family/friends is not possible – please reassure them that no news is good news! If there is an emergency and someone needs to contact a team member, they can contact Secret Compass's Operations Room on +44207 096 8428 who will endeavour to pass a message on within 24hours.

Cell Phone. Your mobile roaming will work in towns. There may be no coverage along the majority of the route but this part of the back-to-basics appeal and you are encouraged to leave your phone turned off for the duration of the trek.

Exped FAQ

Read our [General FAQ](#) for questions such as 'how do I join an expedition' and more. Frequently asked questions that are specific to this expedition will be added here as we are asked them. Can't find your answer? Contact SCHQ and we'll be pleased to help.

Can I bring a tent?

Due to the minimalist nature of this expedition, tents will not be used. Instead the team will sleep out under the stars using their Bedouin carpets and Farwa. We ask team members to embrace the ethos of the expedition.

What do you mean by minimalist?

In contrast to many of our kit-heavy expeditions, the style of this trip is very different. Most of the key items will be provided by the Bedouin and Secret Compass will provide a (very short) kit list for the remainder. Team members are strongly encouraged to relax and leave behind the distractions of modern life. On past expeditions a few team mates have brought phones as cameras only to regret it, finding them a distraction for themselves and others and a real hindrance to the minimalist feel of the expedition. We strongly encourage you to bring a separate camera along if you want to take photos, so your phone can be left behind or turned off.

Can I charge electronics?

Once the expedition starts there will be no access to mains power so you should come prepared with battery packs or solar chargers. That said, this is an excellent opportunity to unwind and disconnect so please consider whether your electronics are strictly necessary or whether you will enjoy this expedition more by 'unplugging'.

Will my camera work in the desert?

Cameras should not be that affected by the heat and dryness (if it reaches over 45 degrees they might struggle but this would be unseasonably hot). Your best bet is to keep your camera in its bag until you use it and don't keep in the direct sunlight for too long. The main problem is the sand itself. Grains can easily get into the lens systems, particularly compact cameras with zoom lenses. Ones with electronic lens covers are most at risk. The best cameras to use are sealed waterproof cameras which have no external working lenses so no sand can egress them. If using an SLR, then take care to prevent sand getting into a lens housing. Using Prime fixed focal length lenses can help. Take a small paintbrush, a puffer bottle or, even better, a compressed air canister (probably bought in-country if flying in) to blow away sand and grit from moving parts. Take care around the sensor and never wipe this if sand is on the sensor. Take particular care if the wind is blowing or where the sand is very fine.

Will there be telephone signal?

There will be signal in Sharm el Sheikh and Dahab and at various points throughout the trek (usually partway up a mountain). However, we strongly advise you to use this expedition as a chance to disconnect from the modern world and to either leave your phone behind or leave it turned off.

I'm a vegetarian. Can I join?

Teammates with dietary requirements are welcome to apply for this expedition and should state their specific requirements when applying, Secret Compass may ask for further details or call to discuss your requirements.

I've never done a desert trek before. Can I still come?

It's hard to recreate the conditions of a desert trek in the fog of Wales or the humidity of Singapore so we don't require our team members to have completed a desert expedition before. However, experience of multi-day treks or expeditions, as well as a good level of fitness and positive attitude, will be a great preparation for this trip.

Can I arrive late?

As the plan outlines, there is a chain of transport to get teammates to the trailhead of the expedition, so unfortunately start and end times are not flexible.

Do you provide further advice?

You might find our [Get Ready](#) section useful, with further advice about fitness, flights, travel insurance, visas and our approach to risk management.

How can I join this team?

If you feel that the Handbook answers all your questions, you can request a space on the team by completing the [booking form](#) and submitting a deposit.