

ELENA KOZODAEVA

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# Journey to the East

NOTES TRAVELER, PART 2



Elena Kozodaeva

**Journey to the East**

«Издательские решения»

**Kozodaeva E.**

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This is the second book in the series «Journey to the East». The book contains essays on my many trips to the Sinai (Sharm, Dahab, the monastery of St. Catherine, the oases of Sinai, Blue Hole, Colored and White canyons, waterfall Ashok, travel to Taba, Nuweiba, El-Tour, RAS Mohammed, etc.). A separate Chapter is devoted to the traditions and lifestyle of the Bedouin of Sinai. Here are stories about Jordan (Petra, Aqaba), Tunisia.

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# **Journey to the East**

## **Notes traveler, part 2**

### **Elena Kozodaeva**

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## Sinai roads

I discovered this wonderful place quite by accident. Came somehow in the midst of our gray and slushy winter in a travel Agency and asked them to find me a ticket to the sea and the sun. Certain wishes I did not, just suddenly wanted blue sky, sea and warmth! And it so happened that fate brought me to Sinai! In Egypt I was only in Hurghada and Cairo, saw Memnon the colossi, the pyramids of Giza and Karnak temple. But my first trip to Sinai in 2004 was a turning point in my life. I can't imagine yourself without this edge, he truly became my second Homeland. In this book, I gathered their impressions of his numerous trips to the Sinai. I hope that my experience and knowledge will help tourists in a new way to discover Egypt.



The map of Sinai.

## Sharm El Sheikh

My acquaintance with the Sinai began with the Sharm. By a twist of fate in the winter I went to rest in Egypt and saw the Sinai. I continue to go here for twelve years, for a long time already know all the sights and sharing the experience with those who are going there for the first time.



How beautiful Sharm early in the morning!

Inside Sharm there are not many places to visit – Old Market, Naama Bay, “1001 nights”, the Dolphin show, perhaps, and all. The old town has a small fish restaurant, where the food is tasty and inexpensive. I recommend everyone to visit it. In Naama Bay there is a sense to go shopping and take a walk along the promenade. Tourists come to Sharm for a beach vacation, well and shopping. And all the interesting places are outside the city.



“1001 nights” in Sharm





Inside the complex “1001 nights”



Couldn't stop myself and made some photos in the Eastern interior.



Buying spices can be difficult. Especially when such a choice!





How do you like that dried crocodile? Actually he wood.



Partake of the local customs and try on the galabya.



Buying a Shisha in Naama Bay.

## The bedouins of Sinai

The main wealth of this region is the Red sea, the sun and, of course, people. Locals (Egyptians, Bedouins and Copts) greeted visitors with a smile, because well aware that the main source of income for them – the tourists. I often had to communicate during their trips with many people, some of whom I know many years. This essay I dedicate to the Bedouin of Sinai. Bedouins and Copts constitute a minority in relation to General population of Egypt, they constitute no more than 10% of the total population, but nobody knows the exact figures. Their religion is Islam with all the ensuing consequences.



Women with children work part time that offer tourists tea and jewelry.

The Sinai Peninsula is home to 5 major clans (families) of the Bedouins. Almost everywhere the Bedouin will find a distant relative or acquaintance. Distinguishes these people of extraordinary hospitality, they are always ready to help, to share the latest piece of bread and be sure to buy traveler's tea. Probably, these customs produced for thousands of years, because life in the desert very difficult and dangerous. If you don't help today the traveler, it may simply die, and tomorrow you can be in his place. The Bedouin cherish their families, parents touching care of children, and the children honor and respect their parents. In the family usually between 6 and 10 children, the older look after the younger, but without the quarrels and fights, too, is not bypassed, as in any family. Parents, as a rule, not yelling at kids, trying to explain to them calmly, but if that's persuasion do not work, you can give a few slaps. Again, all families are different. However, if one of the members of the family some difficulties, the whole family (and sometimes several families) comes to his aid. The birth of a child, wedding, and other celebrations are also marked with the whole family.

The main source of income for the Bedouin is the camels (in the desert), the tourist business, sometimes to flag a private car (taxi) and the sea. Many of them are engaged in fishing, diving. Almost all men-the Bedouin – born swimmers, easy dive with mask at 5—10 meters. Women beduini almost can't swim because they have to swim in clothes and not float away. But they are skilled in making simple dishes on the fire, the manufacture of all kinds of jewelry from beads and shells, hand embroidery. Many times I observed how the Bedouins bake bread. Knead unleavened dough, rolled out flat bread and baked it on the coals (ash), or is rolled on a metal circle and also



baked on the fire. This bread is delicious with tea, can long shelf life and is an important part of any meal. The tea is a special ritual, which seems also not changed for centuries. In a metal kettle is boiled the water, poured in her tea and placed the sugar, then the tea infuse. Special odor and taste of tea “marmaria” – the grass collected in the desert. This tea is very fragrant, good thirst quencher in the heat and warm in the cold winter days. By the way, winter in Sinai is very harsh, especially in the mountains. The temperature at night can drop below zero, and the day to rise above 20 degrees. Such extreme temperatures and strong winds require warm clothing, rescue blankets made of camel wool is very warm and light.



Beduinka bake bread on the fire.

In recent decades, many customs have undergone changes. Let's just say society has become more open. For example, now a woman can quietly enter into the room where men sit, closing only with this person. But still the house unofficially divided into “female” and “male” half. If the house guests came, men and women can sit together for some time, however, after men drink tea separately, discussing their problems, and women whispering about her on the female half. The man is still the head of the family, the main breadwinner and support. Women from the Bedouin are officially unemployed, but because families with many children, I try to earn some money how can sell beaded jewelry to tourists, offer them tea, etc. Many families trying to give their children at least primary education. Schooling is free, but a lot of kids and not always have money for clothes and books. Younger often wears their older (like us). Actually, the more I learn about the Bedouins, the more I see similarities between us (that's the paradox!). Some boys and girls from affluent families receive a higher education in Cairo.

The wedding of the Bedouins are celebrated very solemnly. Going the family of the bride and groom, and nearly all the relatives who were able to come to the celebration. Definitely one gives gifts to the young – some of the utensils, clothes, furniture, etc. According to custom the groom

should secure the future of his family, i.e. to have the house fully furnished, in which he will lead his wife. Lately to make it harder and harder, and sometimes acts shelter for a few months, then the young family go to live with the parents of the groom. The wife can leave at any time from the husband, i.e. simply file for divorce if husband is not taking good care of her. The woman returns to her parents' house and be allowed to re-marry. The children remain with the mother or with the father (by arrangement). I know several cases when children from two marriages remained with the mother. After the divorce to get child support from the father for children is as difficult as ours.

## Dahab

The city is situated in Dahab Bay, and stretches a strip along the coast. Morning Dahab is full of sun and wind, in the evening quiet as a tired child. Sitting in a cafe, watching the lights in the sea – reminds me of the waist of the dancer.



Dahab is filled with sun and wind.



Dahab Promenade.



Fresh breeze from the sea is like a gentle “good morning!” (Sabah Gamil!). In good weather you can clearly see the coast of Saudi Arabia. Before him there on the doorstep is no more than a hundred kilometers.

The cafe serves Egyptian Breakfast – rice with milk, felafel, Nescafe or tea. However, you can also order pancakes and English Breakfast with eggs and bacon. At lunch, definitely order the fresh fish, stuffed peppers, and garlic cooked on the grill, rice, salad and tahina.



For lunch, order the fresh fish, stuffed peppers, and garlic cooked on the grill, rice, salad and tahina.

The city has many cheap hotels and campuses. You can also rent an entire home or apartment virtually on the beach.



One of the first campuses Dahab – Crazy Camel.

Located in Dahab should not seek in this place of white palaces and luxurious hotels. This is the perfect place to relax and getaway from civilization by the way it there are few.



Fishing boats.

Five-star hotels here also have, but they are not located in the Central part of the city and on its outskirts. And the city itself is full of local color, to which one must get used to and love. Lazily wandering through the streets of the camels, returning home and their own herd of goats sleeping in the shade – a calling card of the city. The entire Dahab is like one big family – small town, and everyone here knows each other. My week goes out to greet all my friends, to inquire about the news, leisurely talk over a Cup of tea, and another week to kiss everybody goodbye until we meet again.



Goats lazily doze in the shade.

Divers well-known sites in the region of Dahab – White Canyon, Blue hole, Ras Abu Galum. Next you will see photos taken underwater at some of these sites. To get from Dahab to them by jeep or by camels.



Photo of coral (underwater).



## The monastery of Saint Catherine

St. Catherine's monastery, situated on the highest mountains of the Sinai, has long been a place of pilgrimage not only believers, but also poets, artists and all those interested in the history and sights of Egypt. People from all over the world travel thousands of miles, to climb to the top of Sinai and to touch the Holy walls.



View of the monastery of St. Catherine from above.

The monastery developed a lot of legends. So, the name of the monastery is connected with the legend of the Holy Martyr Catherine (296 ad) in Alexandria. Catherine are unable to renounce their faith even by order of the Emperor, and was executed. After the death, as legend has it, her body was lifted up to the highest point of the Sinai mountains, and after three century a few monks found her body and buried it in a sarcophagus.

Now the Monastery of St. Catherine – this is the smallest diocese in the world, headed by the Archbishop of Sinai. Sinai Archbishop wears full Episcopal vestments with miter, scepter and a Golden cross. The monastery belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. Most of the monks are Greeks and the monks of the cult of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea, representative Kappadokiyskoy school of Orthodox theology, who lived here in 329—379.



High rise in the sky the impregnable walls of the monastery.

The monastery, around which towering red walls with a height of 12 to 15 meters with watchtowers at the corners, covering the area of the square wrong. But outside the monastery is a whole town with architecture from different eras and styles.

Well-preserved bell tower of the monastery. The bells were donated to the monastery of the Russian Imperial surname.



The bell tower of the monastery of St. Catherine.

The main temple in the monastery is the Church of the Transfiguration, however, during holidays, to visitors open their doors 12 chapels dedicated to the virgin Mary and patron saints. One of them is the chapel of the Burning Bush, which is located near the Church of the Transfiguration. In the monastery there are several wells of Holy water. The most interesting is the well of Moses, about which there was the legendary meeting of Moses and Jethro's daughters, one of whom became his wife.

The monastery of St. Catherine are not only the chapel and temple, but other rooms, which were regarded as the wound service, though are no less artistic and historical value. For example, the refectory in the Church, decorated with Gothic arches and illuminated by a single window.

The monastery has its own library, the size of only 15 x 10 meters, but how precious books are stored here – it is second in importance after the Vatican library. In this room holds about six



million volumes and manuscripts in Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, Syriac languages on theological, historical and scientific topics.

Continue our journey across the Sinai.

In the region of the monastery. Catherine preserved the remains of dwellings of the Bedouins. Many years ago there emerged the first settlements? Who were the first settlers? Scientists speculated. The severe nature of this region demanded extraordinary courage and endurance from the people who settled here. We managed to find also millstones for grinding grains, various vessels and utensils. Ancient legends say that once in the mountains of Sinai was a lot of water – it rained regularly. If you get a lot farther into the mountains, one can find abandoned wells and tanks in which the inhabitants kept the water. Some of the wells are used to this day. The gorges stretch of pipe that runs water from the tops, in some places there are even waterfalls. Now in the mountains still live people (see photo), the kids easily climb on the most inaccessible slopes, not inferior to them in neatness and adults.

Remains of dwellings of the Bedouins. The entrance was filled up inside with a large stone.



Remains of dwellings of the Bedouins, South Sinai.

Even fifty years ago the girls before the wedding, ran away from their suitors and were hiding in the mountains. The task of the groom was to find and catch up with his bride, only then were married. Now customs have changed slightly, but still the groom's parents choose the bride for him.

## The waterfall Ashuk

The harsh climate of Sinai demanded from the indigenous inhabitants of endurance and great adaptability. Grueling summer heat gives way to winter chilling cold. If in summer the stones are heated to 50—60 degrees, in winter the temperature drops to minus 2—3 degrees Celsius, and can even snow. It is widely believed that mount Sinai is completely devoid of water and therefore little wildlife. This is not so. High in the mountains you can find the whole of the lake of rain water and even waterfalls. One of them is the waterfall of Ashuk is within the vicinity of Dahab.



The waterfall Ashuk in vicinity of Dahab

In the winter in Sinai may be heavy rains. The water is stored in natural reservoirs, and the locals are happy to use it for household needs. Of course, this is not drinking water, but to water the garden or wash-wash something is quite good. From the reservoir a system of rubber pipes allows you to hold precious moisture almost to the housing.

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