

OUR EXPERTS

ENJOYING THE SUMMER HEAT IN LIWA

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Regular readers will have probably noticed that Oasis Offroad refuses to curtail their off-roading adventures in the hot months of the summer, even running an annual summer trip in Liwa (see Zodiac Liwa – OutdoorUAE #45, September 2014). Oasis Offroad will run two of two hot weather trips to Liwa this summer and the first of those was our “Desert Rose” expedition on 15th/16th May.

There is one concession we always make for the high temperatures – since it is rather hot for camping, Liwa trips in the summer are hotel based, and in this case all were glad we did – the UAE experienced a heatwave that particular weekend and the mercury hit 47 degrees Celsius on Friday afternoon!

A total of 24 couples and families booked rooms at the lovely Liwa Hotel, which is located in Liwa City (formerly known as Miziara’a, which you will still see on some signage), atop a hill which gives lovely views over this major oasis.



Level 1 convoy

Oasis Offroad drivers from Al Ain, Abu Dhabi and Dubai converged on the hotel during the Thursday afternoon and evening; those who were not working arrived as early as they could to make the most of the beautiful swimming pool and garden.

The first “official” activity of the weekend necessitated an extremely early start on the Friday morning; once assembled in the car park at 4:15 a.m., the convoy of fifteen cars travelled by road and track to a scenic spot

to search for desert roses. Not everyone knew what a desert rose was, whether it was a rock or a flower, so I sneaked down to the spot the day before with my friend Chris Lidster and he “planted” some silk roses, which my husband had painstakingly painted a sand colour. The desert garden did provoke some interest among the group and even those who knew what a desert rose were slightly perplexed. We did find real desert roses but left them in the ground for the next visitors to see (it is illegal to remove them).

The early start was planned to not only beat the heat, but also to provide an opportunity for the photographers to grab some shots of a real desert sunrise. There is nothing like a pre-breakfast cup of tea and a biscuit so early in the morning and some of our group had come well prepared with

Planting desert roses



Snaking down a slipface



kettles and stoves to cater for the group. We all were back at the hotel in time for their buffet breakfast which offers a wide choice of cold and hot dishes as well as fruits, yoghurts, breads and cheeses.

The next outing was an off-road drive planned for the early afternoon so the group took the chance to relax in their rooms or catch some rays by the pool. The Liwa Hotel is currently officially classified as a three-star hotel, however it has been extensively refurbished over the last two years and visitors expecting a mid-range hotel are in for a treat. The rooms are very spacious with comfortable beds and beautiful soft furnishings. All rooms have a balcony which overlooks the Miziara’a oasis and offers a great view of the sunrise or sunset.

The Liwa Hotel has two restaurants, a coffee shop and a swim-up pool bar; the main restaurant offers buffet or a la carte at breakfast, lunch and dinner times; the Al Misayl Bar offers a full range of beverages and light food; and of course there is always their extensive room service if you cannot tear yourself away from your balcony.

On Friday afternoon over 20 cars between three convoys took off into the desert just south of Madinat Zayed, for an easy/moderate drive towards a couple of our favourite spots – the “scorpion bowl” and the “oskhosh tanker.”

My convoy was comprised mainly of level one drivers who I had led on a long drive near Al Ain just the week before in preparation for this long trip. We have some quite large slipfaces near Al Ain but the group were generally in awe of the massive dunes and endless desert of this area. Passenger Emma recalled in the group trip report: “We drove down the steepest slipface any of us had encountered. With a deep breath, some exclamations, we all crawled down like flies down a wall and made it to the tanker where we met Zach’s group. Time was getting on and the blazing Arabic sun was beginning to set. We stopped on our final dune to watch

the sunset and take some last pictures - we had watched the sun rise that morning with Marina in another part of the desert and it was fitting to watch it set with her too.”

Zach took a more challenging route out to the tanker and with all “situations” dealt with by self-recovery, they made a good pace. He reports “Along the way, we had the pleasure of viewing a solar powered oasis. On that hot day, it would’ve been nice to jump into the cistern to cool off. For me, it was nice to finally see the legendary tanker and to pose for a picture on top. The return trip was a bit more technical as we had to find a line ascending the slipfaces. We had started to run out of daylight and I made the decision to take the easy exit gatch north to MZ.”

Nic’s convoy took a meandering route north of Zach’s line, but efforts to reach either of the waypoints were thwarted by car troubles in the convoy. She says “While we didn’t reach either destination, the drive was still lovely, the scenery superb and the company second to none.”

On Friday evening, the whole group enjoyed a buffet dinner on the terrace which the hotel had decorated with balloons since some of our members had birthdays - they even provided a complimentary cake with candles. The service at the Liwa Hotel is one of the ingredients which make it such a wonderful place to stay – nothing was too much bother for their attentive staff led by their manager Mr Trevlynn.

Activities were planned for Saturday morning too – some of our marshals led a level three drive through the impressive crescent area and I took a small convoy to experience some UAE heritage and culture.

There are a surprising number of refurbished forts along the length of the 140km



Level 3 Saturday group



Car troubles in Nic’s convoy

road which traverses the Liwa Crescent, but we opted to visit Al Hayl tower, which is a small mud brick fortification located inside a date palm oasis. After exploring the plantation and its falaj system, we moved towards the famous Liwa Fish Farm, where we encountered a film crew – who asked if they could film us!

Some Points About Liwa in the Summer

- Hardcore offroaders can drive all day but the sand conditions and the temperatures make short trips better for the less experienced and those with children as passengers.
- A Liwa trip does not have to be 100% sand dune driving; mix up the activities with a visit to a fort and some chill out time by the pool and all the family can come along.
- There are some amazingly cheap deals during the summer at the Liwa Hotel; check out their website at www.almarfapearlyhotels.com/liwa.

Zach’s group at the tanker



Swimming pool fun for the kids



Liwa Hotel Pool

