

Every month a new trip will be uploaded to this site: enjoy!

Here is a versatile drive – and those are often the best kind, since there's something for everyone.

It is a short desert drive; and it can be easy or difficult, as you please. It offers lovely picnic views in a shaded forest and, at the same time, exhilarating climbs up a long dune slipface. The drive then ends at a little-known beach, after passing through an abandoned historical village. And if that is not enough versatility for you, if you choose to spend the night you can camp freely on the beach (with the Al Hamra ghosts), enjoy an inexpensive night at the nearby Bin Majid Beach Resort or sink into luxury at the even closer Al Hamra Fort Hotel and Beach Resort.

We start not far east of Umm al Quwain, basically on the outskirts of Ras al Khaimah, and end up at the beach.



On a cloudy day, Dar Rossetti, 12, enjoys a walk along the shallow and very calm shore at Al Hamra

Download the KML file for your GPS by clicking [here](#).

Once downloaded, you can import the file into your GPS device and take it on the road, or double-click that file and it will open automatically in Google Earth if you have that installed (all adventurers should! [Google Earth](#)).

And here is an interactive map of the route.

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View [Al Hamra](#) in a larger map



The Toyota Land Cruiser is the king of the UAE motoring scene, and it has been for decades. The 60th Anniversary Edition we drove was outstanding in its delivery of power (5.7L V8 engine), comfort, safety, and imposing road presence. Nothing we could throw at it could phase it, and it shrugged off all off-road demands we placed on it – deep beach sand: laugh! Steep dune climb: laugh!



And the old expat adage holds true: if the local boys can't break it, buy it!



At the far end of the forest, at waypoint 5, is the climb. If you feel comfortable, have a go. Just remember one important piece of advice: you go up straight, and you go down straight (in reverse if necessary) - never ever turn sideways on a steep incline such as this one. Waypoint 6 will be the plateau at the top.



[Click for larger photo.](#)

Should you prefer the secondary and easier route up, either because of your vehicle not making it up or simply because you or your passengers do not want to drive up the slipface - which is a perfectly sensible decision, by the way - then drive back along the slipface, back through the forest, and at waypoint 3 look to your left to see a track leading up to a couple of portable cabins. This track will take you up the plateau, where you can reach waypoint 6 the easy way.

After taking a few moments to enjoy the view from the top of the slipface, turn your attention to the desert heading north, towards the sea. You will need to decide whether to make the drive easy or difficult. Only you

and your fellow drivers can make this decision, based on experience.

As you look west, you will notice that you will be navigating against the grain of the desert; that is, you will be driving against the slipfaces, and every dune will require you to fight up and over it. It is a short distance, but it can make for an exhilarating drive. If this wild route is your decision, then skip your GPS to waypoint 15 and make your own way there.



If you prefer to follow the ready-made tracks, then from waypoint 6 head west looking for the beginning of a well-established sand track to the north, which will cut through the dunes, and which even first-time sand drivers will be able to follow. It is marked as waypoints 7-14.



Al Hamra is an abandoned fishing village, with a central fort. Applications are in to have it declared a UNESCO Heritage Site, but at the time of our visit it was open and derelict. In the dark it must be a pretty scary place, so take that into consideration, or maybe plan to arrive at dusk on purpose!

To learn more about the ghosts that reputedly inhabit the village, see this traveller's blog page [Around the World in 1000 Days](#).



The houses at the Al Hamra abandoned village were built with coral and sea-mud, which makes quite a contrast with the modern construction going on to the west - more luxury beach resorts and apartments, it seems. To the east is a busy port, so Al Hamra beach is very well protected and as calm as a swimming pool.



Numerous sting-rays were spotted in the shallows, and there are several rock jetties which could be good fishing spots. Along the coast to the east is more open beach.

Please read the original article: [For a beach all to yourself, the route is through the dunes](#). Published by The National, Feb. 19, 2011.

Or view a pdf file of the original article [here](#), as published in The National.

Please make sure you read the [Disclaimer](#) and plan your trips with due care.