

*Ras al Khaimah, translated as “the head of the tent”, is well-known for its wild mountains and the many driveable tracks that criss-cross them, often tapering off into spectacular and challenging hiking trails. However, for this [trip], we’ll take a different and surprising look at the territory of Ras al Khaimah - the forest side.*

The itinerary proposed is a gentle meander on well-worn sand tracks, although more adventurous drivers simply need to make their own track a few hundred metres to the right.



So, there’s the terrain - it’s a beautiful area of forests, served by compact sand tracks. A great place to picnic, and a lovely leisurely weekend drive.

As you’ll see from the map, the route starts from the beach - where we slept the previous night, and part of another trip - and heads south to Waypoint 001, which is where you leave the main road to visit Awafi, a very steep sand dune which is popular with off-roading fanatics and also hosting the annual Awafi Festival - where insanely modified sand-churning vehicles race to reach the top. See them try in the youtube video below:

<http://youtu.be/vgrTuwY5Wm4>

Sometimes extra entertainment is provided:

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](#)).

[View Awafi South in a larger map](#)

Our testdrive Honda Pilot did very well indeed on the sand tracks, and never once hesitated or required any assistance.



And of course I had to try the famed Awafi hill climb!!!





Not too shabby for an AWD and super-comfortable vehicle - nowhere near the top, but it sure was fun trying!



I don't mind a little romp within common sense limits of safety; that's what SUVs are made for. Just watch out for other vehicles, especially the ones for rent!





But best of all this drive takes you through the Ras Al Khaima only the locals know - the forested area where for generations they have raised camels and enjoyed cool breezes in the shade of mature ghaf trees.









Plenty of open picnic spots.



And plenty of camels and goats.







Further south, towards the end of the route, just before you re-join tarmac, admire the large farms that are testament to the rich underground water resources of the area. In fact, if you cast a geological eye, it is clear that the scarce rains run off the Hajar Mountains and stream directly underground to this area, where they collect beneath the surface.





View a pdf file of [the original article](#), as published in March 2011, or read the archived newspaper article on The National website [here](#).

My disclaimer is [here](#).