

There are few things more exciting than finding something valuable on an desert trip - this could be an emotional memory, like a rare glimpse of a gazelle giving birth; or something of material value, like a chest of gold coins hurriedly buried by a Bedouin trader a century ago!

And not only is the find itself incredibly satisfying: the hunt and search, and even the remote possibility of finding something, has often transformed an average trip into an adventure.

On this trip, we will visit one of the abandoned stop-over wells on the old caravan route that connected Dubai to Al Ain - it is a well-known and well-researched area, but every so often friends manage to find a coin, a bullet casing, a bronze arrow-head, a bead from a necklace or bracelet, a seashell or ornament that the Bedu women would adorn their clothing with... anything you find must be handed over to the Abu Dhabi museum authorities, of course.

Based on the fact that it used to take three days to cover the 130 kilometres from desert oasis to coast, it can be deducted that this permanent water well would be the first night on the journey seawards, or the second night on the journey inland.

Aaaah, but you don't believe in treasure tales, do you?

Well...



I recently explored the area in a modern-day camel of the desert: the new Jeep Wrangler, with its new engine blasting 83 more horsepower than its predecessor and offering a torque output of 260 ft.lb! The all-aluminium Pentastar engine and the new 5-speed transmission have transformed what was an already excellent off-

copyright Paolo Rossetti, ask first for reproduction of contents (text, photos, etc.) - prosett@weekenduae.com

roading machine into a shining star!



This means the driver will have extra available power on tap when required, and the result is that the Wrangler can now slow down and relax over dunes, without worries of getting stuck – just blip the right foot and power out of tough spots with ease, rather than revving around at sustained speed in order to keep momentum on your side should a soft patch of sand appear as used to be the case before.



Our destination, the abandoned well, is well within reach of Dubai- and Sharjah-based off-roaders, as we will start from exit 50 of the Al Ain - Dubai highway (waypoint 1), which is between the towns of Al Faqa and Al Hayer.

The highway exit leads directly onto a sand track accessing a camel racetrack.



Stay to the outside of the camel track when you get the chance, or you will find that you are driving on the inside ring. When the races are on, the camel owners and their supporters follow the progress of their race-camel by driving alongside - if you do find yourself on the inside track, just wave! People are always friendly in the desert.



The way forward is on sand tracks, but a 4×4 vehicle is required.

To make it more interesting, the GPS track I provide takes you on a little exploration of the area, before reaching the actual well.



Alongside a green fence, clear and recent gazelle tracks can be seen in this photo.



And up and over a few dunes will make a nice driving trip.



The Wrangler performed admirably!



Our destination is the actual lip of the well, as the well itself has been filled.



The entire area can be explored on foot.



As for the treasure hunt, just try this when you notice bored children at a campsite, perhaps missing their facebook connection: “Hey guys, did you know that here we are probably not far from the spot that years ago a camel caravan was attacked by thieves. During the vicious swordfight that ensued, the wife of a rich trader managed to dig a shallow pit in the sand, and she buried her jewellery chest in it, with the intention of returning for it later, should they survive - well, they didn’t, and that treasure chest could be anywhere in this area...”

If I know my children well enough, they will comb the entire campsite, in professional grid pattern, leaving no square foot of sand undisturbed, until either they find that treasure or they are called away because it has already got dark!

In any case, it is a beautiful desert area, and a lovely way to spend a day outdoors.



And all on easy, well-established tracks if you prefer to keep off the dunes. Just follow the GPS track and map below!

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 [Abandoned Well](#) in a larger map

View a pdf file of [Abandoned Well](#), the original article, as published in The National.

My disclaimer is [here](#).