



Join us on exciting activities

Experience an island like no other. Let your personal guide take you and your family on an exciting adventure, while we protect and preserve approximately 15,000 animals that call Sir Bani Yas home.

Opening of the Archaeological Site

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Welcome to the new edition of Desert Islands Newsletter.

Now that the hot summer season is coming to an end, many great happenings and activities are taking place on the island which we would like to share with you. In our wildlife -related news, the populations of our animals are expanding constantly and becoming too great for the area. Now our conservation team is fully prepared for the start of the game capture season to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the wildlife. Meanwhile, the five-star Desert Islands Resort & Spa by Anantara continuous to offer its discerning guests some unique experiences – from tailor-made dining experiences in the open wild to mountain biking adventures designed to suit all riding levels. We are especially delighted to share with you a horse-riding experience by one of our most recent island guests visiting the newly opened Sir Bani Yas Stables. Read on to learn more about these exciting happenings.

Dining in the Wild



Desert Islands Resort & Spa by Anantara is offering visitors an unrivalled dining experience “Dining by Design” with an array of delectable dishes set out in a unique fashion away from the resort and on various places on the island. Imagine indulging in a culinary treat while watching the sunset on the edge of a breathtaking wadi, or enjoying a private barbecue with majestic Arabian Oryx wandering in the distance. Or you can even wind down from your desert safari adventures to a romantic candlelit dinner by the healing sounds of Arabian Gulf’s gentle rhythmic waves.

To learn more about this Dine by Design tailor-made concept, log on to desertislands.anantara.com.

Personal Account: Horseback Riding on Sir Bani Yas



Dana Al Mutawa, a 22-year-old Emirati undergraduate student, has been a professional competitor of endurance horseracing for the past four years. She has participated in various championship races in the UAE that were on a local and international calibre, thus achieving a good ranking throughout. In 2011, she came in first place at the Sheikh Sultan Al Nahyan 80-kilomtere Championship in Abu Dhabi. Dana shares with us

her exciting horseback riding experience from her visit to Sir Bani Yas Stables this summer.

“I had a great experience at the stables of Sir Bani Yas Island this summer, where I got to choose from a beautiful horse from a variety of polo and Arabian breeds. I used the track across the beach to gallop across the shoreline with the ocean breeze gently blowing across my face. What an experience! The cool thing about the stables is that they are open not only for advanced riders, but beginners who may have had the passion for horses but never the chance to ride one. I took a tour around the island, and enjoyed my own safari adventure while on horseback. I was really overjoyed to watch the gazelles wandering by. I also passed by a giraffe and spotted an eland. The place is outstanding, and one that you may never find elsewhere. As a horse rider, I would really recommend this place as I am definite that horse lovers would love the spot, and would always want to come back.”

Animal Capture Season

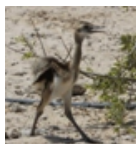


The Conservation Team on Sir Bani Yas started their game capture season after long summer preparations. During the hot and humid summer months a limited amount of hands-on work can be done with the wildlife, since handling or capturing can harm or stress the animals in such weather conditions. Now that the game capture season, which runs from September to May, is on, the team has a very large job ahead. The animal populations on Sir Bani Yas are expanding and the numbers are becoming too great for the area. The sexes are therefore going to be separated into different areas and enclosures to slow down breeding. For this to be entirely successful, over 6,000 animals need to be relocated to various areas on the island.

Due to the large numbers that need to be moved, the team uses passive capture techniques to catch the animals. This usually involves animals being fed in a certain fenced area so they can become habituated to feeding on that particular location. This feed area will be part of a system of gates, passages and smaller rooms. The animals are then closed into the feed area and filtered through the passage system and divided into males and females, and according to their species. Animals that are captured are checked for injuries and illnesses, or their level of fitness related to certain good husbandry practices such as hoof trimming of wild sheep and wild goat species.

This is a very large, time consuming project which will take the team several years to complete fully. The end of 2012 will see the release of a number of Barbary Sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*), one more male giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*) and some Urial Sheep (*Ovis orientalis*) into the Arabian Wildlife Park to add to the animal diversity. All this will add an enriching experience for visitors embarking on the nature and wildlife drives.

Animal of the Month: Greater Rhea



Sir Bani Yas is not only home to many well-known Arabian species but also to some other exotic animals and birds. One such species is the Greater Rhea (*Rhea americana*). There are several different species and subspecies of rhea which all originate from South America. The Greater Rhea is found specifically in central and eastern Brazil and lives in bush land habitat near to rivers. The rhea feeds on plants, leaves, roots, seeds, lizards, insects and some carrion. In the wild, they can sometimes live in flocks of up to 100 birds.

Sir Bani Yas currently has 34 rheas and two chicks. The chicks are born striped to aid their camouflage and make it easier for them to hide from predators. Rheas are polygamous with males breeding between two and twelve females. The male builds a nest in the form of a simple scrape in the ground and lines the bottom with grass or leaves. Each of the females lays her eggs in the same nest; the male then incubates all the eggs.

All the chicks in the nest will hatch within 36 hours of each other. The females may mate with more than one male and therefore lay several clutches of eggs in different nests. The males are in charge of caring and protecting the young chicks and will charge at any predators that approach their chicks. The yellow and black striped chicks slowly grow feathers and reach full adult size at six months old. Rheas, however, do not breed until they reach two years old. The numbers of Greater rhea in the wild are dwindling due to loss of habitat and so preservation efforts, such as on Sir Bani Yas, are highly important to save them from nearing extinction!

Mountain Biking Routes



One great way to explore the island is on a mountain bike, giving people a whole new perspective to check out the landscape. We have devised two routes that allow guests to see a variety of wildlife, although it is not guaranteed what you will encounter since the animals are free roaming. Most of the time, you will come across gazelles, hyrax and flamingos; and on the longer routes, there is more of a chance to catch an ostrich or oryx wandering by.

The shorter course, which we have dubbed The Blue Route, is a 9-kilometre slow and relaxing ride around the salt water lagoon and surrounding sand wadis. Because of it is easy and does not require any major skills, this route is ideal for beginners, families and children and should take between 45 minutes to an hour. The Purple Route is a slightly more technical alternative and requires good level of fitness, hence it is more favourable among intermediate and advanced riders. This 18-kilometre course, which can last up to two hours, is mainly off-road and ventures into the Arabian Wildlife Park and right into the salt dome hilltops.