

The Rice Tree Chronicles

Eating Medoul dates

Fresh medoul dates don't get any better than from Tangier and with the call to prayer heard from all corners of the city, children still continue playing on the swings in the park. I turn away from sampling several varieties of dates, but there are more than 100 varieties and I don't have the time.

While the four thirty sun hangs high above the horizon, it begins to edge towards the horizon and sunset would make for a comfortable afternoon walk.

The day has been uneventful except for a walk to the shore where a shoe full of fine sand negated any need to collect a sample from the Sahara to take home, but upon setting foot on the sand I saw in the distance the silhouette of ships of the desert sitting on the beach and even before going any further the unfamiliar but distinct odor of camel wafted on the sea breeze and soon one saw definite signs of the beasts whose moose like dung is unmistakably identifiable. For some strange reason, large animals like moose and camels seem to uncharacteristically dispense pebble size dung.

Whether it was the silhouettes of camels in the distance or the barnyard like scent of them, I found myself drawn to the beasts like an animal magnet.

"Come my brother... the ride for 10 minutes will only be 100 dirhams or about \$10." I resist. I tell the herder that I am afraid of heights.

"He not high...this camel, he have very short legs."

"You want picture? Ok Step here..." And before I know it, I have somehow allowed myself to sit upon and to be strapped in to a short, stationary beast. Then just as suddenly have been somersaulted forward then backward in a move faster than a camel's wink. I am now about 10 feet from ground zero and feeling a bout of vertigo overtaking me. I had seen you tube videos of tourists falling over the camel's head or recalcitrant beasts turning its head not to be petted but probably to take a chunk out of one's leg.

I know that camels can be a bugger to ride, but my only experience had been seeing Peter O'Toole riding at full gallop upon a giant, foaming at the mouth, bouncing brute. I will be expected to ride one into my camp in the desert. I pray to Allah for a skinny camel with short legs, but fear that they only come in two sizes...a Shaquille O'Neal regular and with size 22 feet.

The rest of the day was spent calming my nerves for the anticipated camel ride into the Sahara. It may be wishful thinking but surely a pigmy sized camel would be more to my liking.

Tangier, Morocco
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