

Walking camels through the desert for a cause

| By Shalini Rao | 07/11/2002 | [Print this page](#)



Lilianne with a camel at the Camel Hospital in Dubai.

Lilianne Donders to walk from Iran to Oman, raise funds for the Palestinian people

Often called the "camel rider", Lilianne Donders was in Dubai recently to give a talk to the German Speaking Women's Group at the Umm Suquiem Coffee Shop.

This is one tough lady. She has fought breast cancer and walked with her camels from Syria to Tehran (Iran). Now she is all set to traverse the sands once again with her companions - the camels.

This time, Lilianne has decided to walk from Tehran to Oman to raise funds for the people of Palestine. Another inspiring reason for this journey will also be to take her two white camels back to their homeland, Oman.

When she was in Oman for many years, Lilianne discovered her true calling while learning about the Bedouin culture, educating them and being a part of their everyday life. At the end of her stay in Oman she felt more enlightened.

Oman was a turning point in her life. She says, "I was fascinated by the Bedouins and their lives behind the mask. I got the chance to understand them and while doing so I was able to travel through Oman extensively."

Lilianne's love for camels began in Oman where she received a gift - two camels - as a token of friendship. But it was in Syria that Lilianne's bonding with the camels began. She found them to be intelligent, loyal and very loving.

She says, "They learn fast and soon I discovered that they could switch the lights in the house on and off, open doors, drink water and tea from bottles and protect me from the slightest hint of danger."

When Lilianne discovered she had breast cancer she was very upset and for a long time refused to accept it. She narrates her experience, "I did not want to admit it but realised that I was being stupid. I went to London and received treatment. It was a difficult time but I wanted to get through it and not dwell on it."

She fought cancer bravely. Took up yoga and did everything to strengthen her mind and body. In 2000, she took a journey of 1,600 kilometres (over a period of two-and-a-half months) to Tehran and made it her mission to raise money to support the Bedu women in the desert around Palmyra, Syria.

And today she is all set again to walk again for a cause. She plans to walk her friends to Oman to raise money to help rebuild a hospital in Palestine. Lilianne believes she has had a "rewarding life" and continues to reach out to people in whatever way she can.