

Men, Mission and Machines

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Walking Camels for a Cause!

Lilianne Donders plans to walk her camels to Oman to raise funds for the
 Palestinian people

By Shalini Rao

[Lilianne Donders](#)

Lilianne Donders is called the “camel rider”. 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. 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 I 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 the year 2000, she took a journey of 1600 kms over a period of two-and-a-half months to Tehran and made it her mission to raise money to support the Bedou women in the desert around

Palmyra, Syria. And today, she is all set to walk again for a cause. She plans to walk her camel friends to Oman to raise money to help re-build a hospital in Palestine. Liliainne believes she has had a rewarding life and continues to reach out to people in whatever way she can.

Where there is a will, there is a way, goes the saying. Muslims too should develop a sense of commitment for themselves and for the society!

(The writer is associated with Gulf News Tabloid)