

Adventure into Silence

5th - 12th October 2017

With guest speaker **Sara Maitland**, author of *A Book of Silence*

Traditions of the East and West say that silence is found in its purest form in the desert. This special journey is an opportunity to spend time in one of the few places on earth where “the crashing sound of silence” (from the story of Elijah) can still be found. Based in a remote and beautiful sandstone area of South Sinai, periods of silence each day are interspersed with time together as a group and with our hosts and long-standing friends from the *Muzeina* Bedouin, who offer us a warm welcome in their desert home. This unique and enriching experience has now become a sought-after annual Wind Sand & Stars retreat.



“I was so impressed by the hospitality and the way we were looked after. It was wonderful, it really helped me and was, as I had been told, transformative ...” Margaret Halsey, 2015

“This is an extraordinary trip: As much silence as you could wish for; opportunities to balance the silence with a carefully and thoughtfully planned programme of walks and talks; the Bedouin hospitality and culture. I would seriously consider this becoming part of my retreat programme every year, it is so rich and rewarding and nourishing.” David Powell, 2014

“It was one of those experiences that you live on for the rest of your life. The combination of scenery – simplicity of living – silence – gentle companionship – beauty and hospitality – and so much more there is not room for – made it a profound spiritual experience.” Kathryn Turner, 2013

In her widely praised *A Book of Silence*, the prize winning author **Sara Maitland** explored silence, both as a memoir of her own journey into silence and as an important cultural history.

Wind Sand & Stars are specialists in helping those who have never ventured into this type of environment before, as well as offering unusual opportunities for seasoned travellers.

All are welcome on this non-denominational journey.



Itinerary

Day 1: The Journey to South Sinai

We are met on arrival at Sharm el Sheikh International Airport by our Wind Sand & Stars representatives and drive north to the quiet resort of Nuweiba on the Gulf of Aqaba.
Overnight 4 hotel, Nuweiba*

Day 2: Acclimatise and meet our Bedouin hosts

In the morning we depart for our desert camp, located in a beautiful and remote golden sandstone valley. We can stop on the way to see the *Nawamis*, remarkable tombs dating from the Bronze Age. On arrival our Bedouin hosts welcome us with cups of sweet tea and we can spend some time acclimatising to our new environment. There will be a seminar with Sara before the first opportunity to have time in the silence of the desert. Modern life gives few occasions for total silence, Sara will lead people gently a step at a time into silence and there will always be the option to stay by the fire for tea and company.
Sleep overnight under the stars

Days 3 - 6: The Journey into Silence

Awake to the glorious desert dawn and enjoy breakfast of tea with freshly baked Bedouin bread, as we take in the view of the surrounding sandstone outcrops and distant hills. There will be a morning seminar with Sara before a period of time to experience the desert silence. The length of time and portion of the day in silence will depend on the aspirations and needs of the group as the week progresses. Each day there will be an optional excursion on foot with the local Bedou who have worked with Wind Sand & Stars for 25 years, these could include a walk at dawn or in the evening and also a star walk during the night. Meals will all be prepared by our Bedouin cook and taken together, with bottled

drinking water provided throughout. Each evening there will be time to gather together again, to talk and think through the experience of silence, before an early end to the evening for overnight silence broken at breakfast.
Sleep each night under the stars

Day 7: Visit St Catherine's Monastery and return to the modern world *

We head into the mountains where the Monastery of St Catherine lies at the foot of Mount Sinai, a site where early hermits sought solitude and silence in the desert. Built in the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, it is the world's oldest continuously inhabited monastery. Inside we can visit the magnificent Basilica and also view the rare collections of icons and manuscripts in the museum.

There is an optional ascent of Mount Sinai, a steady uphill walk for 2-3 hours along the traditional camel path (with camels available for hire), then up steep Byzantine steps carved into the rocks to the summit. Below lies the Garden of Elijah, where it was told that Elijah hid from God on the mountain.

We can enjoy our evening absorbing the special atmosphere of the Monastery and reflecting upon our time in Sinai, as we also begin to prepare ourselves for our return journey.
O/n St Catherine's Monastery guesthouse

Day 8: Depart

In the morning we enjoy a final seminar with Sara before we depart for Sharm el Sheik and our flight home.

Costs

Land arrangements	£1,050
Flight	£400 - £600 approximately (depending upon time of booking)
Minimum number	10

Cost Includes

- All local transport and accommodation
- Full board (two cooked meals & picnic lunch in the desert including bottled drinking water)
- Qualified leader and local guides
- St Catherine's NP fee and Museum entrance fee
- Comprehensive travel insurance

Cost Excludes

- Egyptian Visa (US\$25 if needed, see separate note)
- Gratuities £50 (invoiced)
- Single Supplement £40 per person (invoiced)
- Soft drinks and any other personal expenses
- Additional transport and accommodation for separate arrival or onward travel outside the main itinerary
- Additional insurance premium for clients 65 years or over

Visa

Please note a visa is NOT required for this itinerary, unless you are travelling elsewhere in Egypt independently, or you do not hold a British or EU passport (please refer to the Egyptian Consulate www.egyptianconsulate.co.uk/Visas.php or call the Wind Sand & Stars office for guidance).

ATOL protection

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL Protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is 6382. For further information, visit the ATOL website at www.atol.org.uk.



Please note all desert itineraries are subject to change.

** The final itinerary for St Catherine's Monastery will depend upon the group, local conditions, flight times and also Monastery opening times.*