

HABIBA COMMUNITY



NUWEIBA,
EGYPT



HANDBOOK



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
**ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION**
2021-2030



WELCOME!

TO HABIBA COMMUNITY

This handbook is for volunteers and participants of courses and experiences organized at Habiba Community, providing background information about the project and the location, and practical advice concerning travel, what to bring, and what to expect during your stay.

ABOUT US

Your host Maged and his wife Lorena started Habiba in 1994. The main cornerstones of Habiba Community are Habiba Organic Farm, Habiba Regenerative Learning Center, Habiba Learning Center (for children), the Beach Lodge, the Sinai Date Palm Foundation, and Womad.

Habiba Community is dedicated to building a strong, healthy future for the entire South Sinai Community. This happens by creating an alternative method to relying completely on traditional tourism-based activities and providing the community with means for financial stability.

The city of Nuweiba lies on the coast of Al-Aqaba Gulf in the eastern part of South Sinai (Egypt). Since 1934 Nuweiba has been inhabited by two Bedouin tribes called Tarabin and Muzeina. The vision of Habiba Community is to create a sustainable, regenerative, and self-sustaining food system for the local Bedouin communities by helping them re-green their large back gardens with a mixture of native plants and food crops, and revegetating the water catchment area, known as Wadis, with native and endemic plants.

Through university and NGO partnerships, Habiba is expanding its role in the region and is beginning to serve as a training hub for integrated sustainable development that serves as a model for Egypt's South Sinai and beyond.

DEAR

EARTH RESTORER!



We live in interesting times. We can see the many ways in which vast numbers of people are suffering in many parts of the world. We can see materialism, waste, pollution, and war. We can also understand that every person and every living thing is endangered by human-induced climate change. It has become impossible for us to ignore what is happening. We have been called to act for the benefit of all who are alive and future generations.

As individuals, no matter how hard we work, it is not possible to consider restoring the Earth...but together we are an amazing force and if we so choose we can restore all degraded landscapes wherever they are on the Earth. Restoration needs to be at the center of human intention. When we collaboratively study how to restore the Earth our lives have real meaning. When we live our lives restoring the Earth we know we are doing what we can to redress many of the mistakes of the past and ensure that future generations will enjoy a fully functional Earth.

You are at the heart of this initiative. Congratulations and thank you for choosing to join the Ecosystem Restoration Communities movement to help restore paradise on earth. We want you to have the best experience restoring with us.

Let's restore the earth!

John D. Liu

Founder, Ecosystem Restoration Communities movement



FAST FACTS

ABOUT HABIBA COMMUNITY

Habiba has a dream to regreen the desert around them. Habiba has proven that it's possible at their original site and is now a beacon to what can be accomplished through sound regenerative farming practices in the desert. Local people have seen the result, and today agriculture is beginning to flourish across the region.



- Regenerative agriculture
- Ecotourism
- Restoration of livelihoods
- Soil rebuilding through composting and organic fertilizer application
- Irrigation system management
- Pest management
- Monitoring
- Waste management
- Transplanting
- Polyculture planting
- Collection of wild, native plant seeds
- Rammed earth building
- Making and applying mulch



The climate in Nuweiba is classified as a desert due to the scarcity of rainfall which is less than 10in/25cm per year. Summers are hot and can reach up to 45 degrees Celsius. Winters are short, and very dry, with an average daytime temperature of 15 - 20 degrees Celsius.



ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

WITH HABIBA COMMUNITY

SINAI DATE PALM FOUNDATION

Established and operated by the Habiba Community, the Sinai Palm Date Foundation is bringing new means of sustainable income to the local community.

With a pilot project already underway, the future focus of expanding palm date agriculture in the city of Nuweiba promises to be an exciting development in the years to come.

By encouraging the local population to invest in Medjool date palm trees, Habiba will organize and coordinate the planting and care of an organic, fruit-producing tree that can provide a steady stream of income for the Habiba Learning Center years into the future. Through the project's unique focus, the Sinai Palm Foundation is connecting a wide range of people from varying cultures in the pursuit of organic, sustainable agriculture, as well as promoting education for the Nuweiba community.

Our partners from around the world have the opportunity to sponsor a palm tree, helping the local community while encouraging cultural enrichment and the collaboration of ideas in the process.



ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

WITH HABIBA COMMUNITY

HABIBA LEARNING CENTRE

Habiba Learning Center provides after-school education programs for local children. The main aim is to develop and prepare the young Bedouin generation for life's challenges that lie ahead, by working on skills and knowledge, along with raising agriculture and nutritional awareness.

Habiba Learning Center currently provides an after-school education program for local children aged between 5 and 13 years. The academic subjects covered include Arabic, English, and Math.

The Learning Center is devoted to the concept of Applicable Education. They teach Geometry through Lego and Meccano, Biology through observing plants and animals, and Math through functionally applied methods (using recycled materials). The Learning Center also nurtures the particular skills or interests of each individual and encourages the development of these skills.

Habiba strongly believes in teaching beyond the books: skills and life lessons. In virtue of this, many of the activities they run involve subjects such as Music, Art, Ethics, Social Responsibility, and Caring for the natural environment.

They also invite the community children to get involved in the farm and teach them the importance of producing healthy food.



ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

WITH HABIBA COMMUNITY

WOMAD

WOMAD Sinai is established to help the Bedouin women of Sinai earn a living. They are taught how to make bags, clothes, accessories, and more. These women sell them to visitors at small prices to make income.

These products can be bought directly at different locations:

- Habiba Beach Lodge
- WOMAD Facebook Page
- Andalusia Gallery Facebook Page



HABIBA ORGANIC FARM

The first seed was planted at Habiba Organic Farm in 2007, and it's grown since then in every way! Originally, the farm was intended as a growth strategy to enable food security and a more responsible approach to the environment.

Today, the farm has shown Bedouins, local people, and elsewhere that eco-agricultural farming shows results. And, it has become Habiba's biggest attraction; drawing visitors, volunteers & experts from across the globe. Our vision to green the desert and produce organic food has evolved adapting new and old technologies, sharing knowledge & synergizing differences to benefit the peoples of the Nuweiba region and beyond.

HABIBA REGENERATIVE LEARNING CENTRE

The recent excessive irresponsible practices in agricultural activities in Nuweiba have adversely affected the economic, social, and environmental aspects. This has impacted the welfare of Bedouin communities. Habiba Community observed this and has taken the initiative to make a change, creating a community with a balanced ecological economy in Nuweiba.

Based on the site's immersion within the community, Habiba Community has identified that a major area of focus for the Habiba Regenerative Learning Center (HRLC) is to create a solid foundation of fertile organic soil to provide the necessary nutrients to support all types of life.

To accomplish this, they have a series of missions that are part of the process of creating a healthy soil foundation to support multiple varieties of plants, which include but are not limited to:

- Acquiring food waste
- Compost maintenance
- Irrigation management
- Manure collection
- Manure distribution
- Mulching
- Planting
- Crop maintenance
- Conducting individual research
- Experimental setup and recording
- Seed bombing

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COMMUNITIES (ERC)

ERC is a global, grassroots movement of earth restorers that is helping nature heal itself by replanting; restoring soil, water, and food systems; and increasing local biodiversity on degraded land. ERC is rooted in the belief that community involvement is key to lasting, systemic change. This is why at more than 60 restoration communities in over 30 countries across six continents, ERC is empowering local people to become change-makers with the resources and support needed to ensure that land restoration initiatives succeed and receive the long-term, effective care needed to become functioning ecosystems that remain intact for generations. Learn more and get involved at www.erc.earth



WHAT TO BRING & EXPECT



- Work boots or comfortable sturdy shoes, and sandals for the beach
- Swimsuit
- Clothes for cold winter temperatures and to protect from the wind
- Gloves
- Beach towel
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Natural sun-cream
- Natural toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothpaste): Please only bring biodegradable toiletry products, as everything goes back to the land.
- Water bottle
- Books, paper, pens, and playing cards for the evenings
- A musical instrument, if you play one

The relaxed Beach Lodge offers airconditioned single, twin, or triple accommodations with a private beach on the Red Sea. Campers are also welcome (bring your own tent).

All accommodation units have an en suite bathroom, a shower, and a flushing toilet. There is electricity and Wi-Fi.

The restaurant serves delicious, traditional Egyptian cuisine. Meals are mainly vegetarian in line with our concept of farming and self-sustainability.

The Beach Lodge staff and guides will ease you into an extraordinary desert experience. Return from your restoration activities each day and relax in a hammock by the beach or perhaps swim in the local reefs. Play chess and cards or have a refreshing drink at our beach cafe, followed by a leisurely dinner with your fellow earth restorers and travelers.

THE LOCAL CULTURE IN THE SOUTH SINAI

Habiba Community lies in a territory inhabited by the Bedouin tribe of Arab Himdan, 3 km away from Tarabin and 15 minutes by car from Muzeina. Habiba's location makes it a strong linkage point between three Bedouin tribes of different beliefs and traditions.

Respect, generosity, hospitality, and love are the four pillars of the Bedouin culture. The term "Bedouin" is derived from the Arabic badiya, which refers to the desert and the term badu, which refers to a person living in the desert. The Bedouin refer to themselves as Arabs and more specifically identify themselves with a particular tribe, many of which originated from the land that is now Saudi Arabia.

As times have changed, some Bedouins have shifted from their traditional nomadic lifestyle. There has been a cultural and intellectual shift by the movement from mountains and coastlines to large cities. We aim to capture as much of this knowledge as possible before it is forgotten.

Typically, within the Bedouin culture, it is the task of the woman to take responsibility for the household, the goats, the backyard garden and raising the kids. The women are generally centered within the home throughout their lives, putting the needs of the husband as a priority.

Currently, a small collective is being implemented based out of the Habiba Community, called Diamonds of Sinai. The aims of the program are to: empower young mothers and women of the Bedouin community through the creation of personal cosmetic products, enhance parent-child relationships, enrich cross-cultural exchanges, increase hygiene awareness, and help to recover their femininity.

Men generate income for their families. They do a wide variety of jobs such as selling items on the market, fishing, taxi drivers and tourism. The kids start going to kindergarten when they are 3 or 4 years old and continue going to school until they are 15 or 16, or until they begin working with their fathers. Girls tend to get married at an early age and begin to start their own families. Kids are always playing in the streets, often getting creative with local resources such as old tires and wire. Sometimes they even come to the Habiba Regenerative Learning Center and help out.

Bedouin's language is Arabic but with a Bedouin dialect so let's call their language the Bedouin Arabic.



This language is much closer to the traditional Arabic present throughout the Middle East, however European dialect has influenced the Arabic language in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya.

If you are interested in learning the local language, most people within the Habiba community will be happy to teach you, just as long as you ask nicely.

The food they eat consists of fish (se-mack), and vegetables like eggplant (beh-tin-gan, o-ber-gin), tomatoes (ta-mah-tim), and cucumbers (khey-arr). Most of the meals are consistent on a day to day basis with the occasional chicken (fre-ekh) for special occasions.





HEALTH & SAFETY AND INSURANCE

When you participate at Habiba Community you acknowledge that you and you alone are responsible for your personal well-being and safety. This means if an activity is causing discomfort or pain it is up to you to do what you need to care for yourself. All participants are required to have personal health/accident insurance or travel insurance valid for the South Sinai region.

Habiba Community adheres to the highest level of safety protocols and employs proper personal protection equipment for all activities. A safety briefing will be given on the orientation day. Medical services if required are five minutes away in a hospital in central Nuweiba.

We encourage all participants to read through the Earth Restorer Agreement, which is a contract between the ERC and the participant as to how your relationship will work and the agreements that you will uphold for one another during your stay. You will be asked to sign the agreement upon arrival at Habiba Community. If you choose to leave the Habiba Community for a walk or trip to town we request you notify one of the staff members. We recommend having a mobile phone with our contact numbers with you while offsite in the event you require assistance. We encourage all campers to arrive in a state of wellness! If for some reason you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, cold, flu, or any potentially communicable illness immediately prior to arriving, we ask that you postpone your experience until you are well.



Apart from the vast variety of ecosystem restoration and regeneration taking place, it's the community engagement and solidarity that has been created that has touched me the most, which I believe to be a direct result of improving and restoring our ecosystems.

Melissa, USA

HOW TO GET THERE

HABIBA COMMUNITY

CONTACT US

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The nearest airport servicing the region is Sharm el Sheikh International Airport. Habiba Community can arrange your transfers to and from the airport.

From Cairo, reservations can be placed for bus transit using the Webus mobile application. This journey is estimated to require approximately 8 hours to complete. The buses utilized for this route are both safe and well-maintained.

From the Port of Nuweiba, taxis can be taken to Habiba Community. The locals know the way, and a taxi taken from outside Nuweiba will frequently stop to ask people on the street for directions. Don't worry, this is normal. It's best to negotiate prices before getting in the taxi. If the driver does not speak English, they will find someone to translate for you, but they all speak a little English.

When traveling through Sinai, it's important to keep your passport at hand as there are many security checkpoints that may require it.

We look forward to welcoming you to Habiba Community!

