



AS IT IS

Qatar's Camels Tired of World Cup Fans

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World Cup soccer fans in Qatar cannot spend all of their time watching **matches**.

So, some of them head to the desert outside Doha for camel rides and photos. They want to have a **tourist** experience between games.

Business is good for the animal **handlers**. They are making much more money than usual.

However, the interest is causing trouble for the camels.

Ali Jaber al Ali is 49. He is from Sudan but has been in Qatar for 15 years. He said he started working with camels as a boy. He said he grew up loving camels and can identify them by their faces.

On a normal day, he said, his company would offer around 20 rides during the week and 50 rides on the weekends. But with so many soccer fans visiting the country in recent weeks, he and his team are giving 500 rides in the morning and 500 in the evening.

There's a lot of money coming in, Al Ali said. "Thank god, but it is a lot of pressure."

But that means the camels have little time to rest. The animals are protesting by making loud sounds.

Before roads were built, camels were important to transportation and trade in Qatar. Now they are mostly used in racing and to give rides.

Al Ali said he can tell when they are tired. Usually the camels will not get up or they will sit back down after standing up.

In usual times, the camels can rest after every five rides, but not during the World Cup. They give 15 or more rides in a row.

The day begins for Al Ali at 4:30 in the morning. He said tourists want to get a photo at sunrise. The camels and their handlers get to rest for about two hours in the middle of the day but then must start giving rides again. Al Ali called it the “afternoon battle.”

Not every customer is happy. Pablo Corigliano from Argentina said he was hoping for a more **authentic** experience. The rides start on the side of a large road, just past a city known for its oil production centers.

“I thought I would be crossing the desert,” he said, “but when I arrived, I saw a **typical** tourist point.”

I’m Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

match -n. a sports game

tourist -n. a person who visits another location for pleasure

handler -n. a person who leads and takes care of an animal

authentic -adj. true to real life, without change from the usual experience

typical -adj. usual or normal

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