

# The Camel



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**Wild camels first originated** in North America, and then, before the last Ice Age, they spread from there to East Asia and then across to Afghanistan and Iran and Arabia (and also south to South America where they became llamas and vicunas and alpacas). They became extinct in North America, maybe during the Ice Age.

Camels were domesticated (tamed) long after cows and sheep, maybe about the same time as horses (about 3000 BC). Like horses, they are not as tame and stupid as cows and sheep are.

By the time of the Islamic Empire, there were almost no wild camels (and there still aren't), but people used tame camels all across Africa and Asia, from China to North Africa.

Camels can travel long distances across the desert without needing water, so they were very useful in the Gobi Desert in Asia and in the Sahara Desert in Africa.

But it took a long time to figure out a good pack saddle for camels, so they could carry heavy loads. Because of not having good pack saddles, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans used donkeys more than camels even in the desert. (For instance, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, he rode on a donkey). But around the beginning of the Islamic empire, maybe about 500 AD, somebody in West Asia invented a good pack saddle for camels. After that, people began to use camels as pack animals more and more.

## Bactrian Camel



## **Camelus**                      **bactrianus**

The Germans call dull-witted people *Kamels*, perhaps reflecting the opinion of certain early naturalists such as the German naturalist, Brehm, who described the camel as "unbelievably stupid looking."

The most widely known of the two species is probably the one-humped camel, or dromedary, which is today known only as a domestic animal.

The two-humped camel still exists in a wild state in the Gobi Desert where it is protected by law, and in nearby areas of China. Wild camels exist in conditions where the temperatures may vary from 50 degrees centigrade in summer to 25 degrees or more below freezing. Habitat loss continues to threaten the Bactrian camel; blocking access to only one watering hole in the species' range would adversely effect populations over a wide area.

Although we have long been told that the camels humps contain water, this is not the case. The humps contain fat which can be converted to water when necessary. The camel can go many days and great distances without water. The camel has large eyes protected by two interlocking lashes, which are set under an overhanging brow, all of which protects it from intense desert heat. The camel can completely close its nostrils to blowing desert sand. Both one humped and two humped camels are used. The Dromedary can could carry more than 500 pounds for 40 miles.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Question:

What is the difference between a one humped camel and a two humped camel?

### Answer:

A two humped camel is called a Bactrian Camel. These are Asian camels, which come from the deserts of China and Mongolia. These camels have thick, warm, long, shaggy coats in winter and are equipped for very extreme temperatures. They can withstand cold down to 40 degrees below zero. In summer they shed and can take heat up to 120 degrees fahrenheit.

Dromedary camels have one hump. These camels come from North and East Africa. They have a shorter fibre coat, even in winter, and they are typically taller than Bactrians at the humps. Dromedaries are not equipped for the degree of cold which Bactrians can withstand.

Both camels have very large saucer like feet which assist them in their movement across desert sand.

### Question:

The media portrays camels as ornery, stubborn and ill tempered. Is this true?

### Answer:

Camels are known and loved because of their very affectionate, good-tempered nature. They enjoy the company of humans and other animals and love being brushed and having their big soft noses petted. However, they are VERY large animals and, as with all animals, they want to have their way. They require careful training so you can interact with them positively, and in a safe manner. You may want to take a camel for a walk or ride it in a parade, or take it to participate in a Christmas Nativity scene. All of this takes training. It is certainly not the same as having a dog, and camels aren't for the timid.

Camels are noted for their "Happy Camels" antics. This occurs when they are excited and run about flailing their legs out to the side and into the air.

Question:

Do Camels Spit?

Answer:

Camels can spit as can any animal in the camelid family. This family of animals includes the Bactrian and Dromedary camels, llamas, alpacas, guanacos and vicunas. However, these animals normally spit at each other around food issues - as in - I want all of the food and I want you to have none. So - Spit! Spit! Go Away! Or they may spit at a person, which is unusual, out of frustration or as a defence, feeling that a person may bring it harm.

Question:

What do Camels eat?

Answer:

Camels are primarily grazers. Most of the food which they eat at my farm consists of grass and hay. In addition, camels love carrots, apples, bananas, sweet potatoes, and many other crunchy vegetables and fruits. One of the reasons a camel is well adapted to live in the desert is because of its feeding behavior. It selects only a few leaves from each plant. A camel is also capable of eating parts of the foliage that other species do not, such as the thorns of the acacia tree. Foraging herds of camels will spread over a large area so that they do not eat all of the vegetation. These selective styles of feeding reduce the stress on the plant life and avoids competition between camels and other arid region herbivores.

## FUN FACTS

The dromedary camel is capable of drinking 100 L (30 gal.) of water in just 10 minutes.

Camels store fat in the hump, not water! In fact baby camels are born without a hump because the layer of fat does not develop until they eat solid food.

Unlike most mammals, a healthy camel's body temperature fluctuates throughout the day from 34°C-41.7°C (93°F-107°F.) This fluctuation is important because it allows the camel to conserve water by not sweating as the environmental temperature rises.

The dromedary camel is no longer considered a wild animal. In Africa and Arabia it is a semi-domesticated animal that free ranges but is under the control of herders.

At night, a camel's body temperature is 105 degrees. During the heat of the day, it's 93 degrees.

Distribution of animals in a box of animal crackers: 6 gorillas, 5 bears, 4 camels, 3 rhinos, 2 tigers, 2 monkeys, 2 sheep, 1 buffalo, 1 lion.

The word camels appears in the King James version of the Bible 45 times.

It is illegal to hunt camels in the state of Arizona.

"Camels may build up a pressure cooker of resentment toward human beings until the lid suddenly blows off and they go berserk. In Asia, when a camel driver senses trouble, he gives his coat to the animal. Rather like Japanese workers reported to work off frustrations by beating up models of their executives, the camel gives the garment hell—jumping on it, biting it, tearing it to pieces. When the camel feels it has blown its top enough, man and animal can live together in harmony again." (David Taylor, *Zoo Vet*, Lippincott)

Camels have appeared on two U.S. postal stamps.

- A baby camel is called a calf or colt.



Credits: <http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/animal-bytes/animalia/eumetazoa/coelomates/deuterostomes/chordata/cranialata/mammalia/artiodactyla/dromedary-camel.htm#ff1>

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten horizontal dashed lines.

Main body of handwriting practice lines consisting of twenty horizontal dashed lines.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal dashed lines on a white background.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thick gray border, intended for drawing or free writing.

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