



OUTWARD BOUND OMAN™

Crossing the Empty Quarter: The Challenge, The Team and The Lessons

Background

In December 2015, two Omanis and one Englishman set out on foot from Salalah, the largest city in southern Oman on a journey of over a thousand kilometres to Doha, the capital of Qatar. Mohamed Al Zadjali, Amur Al Wahibi and Mark Evans were on an undertaking of a lifetime: to cross the 600,000km² Rub' Al Khali desert, an area known as 'The Empty Quarter'. The desert represents one of the world's most extreme, inhospitable and at times dangerous environments.

The adventurers were following in the footsteps of Omani guide and explorer Sheikh Salah Bin Kalut al Rashidi al Kathiri, and British explorer Bertram Thomas, who together, eighty-five years earlier in the winter of 1930-31, had been the first to cross what is the largest sand desert on Earth.

Over the course of forty-nine days, travelling on foot, and by camel, the team not only battled an incredibly challenging landscape and a very harsh climate, but also encountered their own personal challenges, with the expedition testing them in new ways physically, mentally and emotionally.

The Lesson Plans

The following three lesson plans, resources and video clips not only chart the incredible journey undertaken by Mohamed, Amur and Mark, but also gives students and their teachers an opportunity to explore the personal qualities, skills and approaches to challenges that come from them, and to consider how challenge can help us grow as individuals. Central to these educational resources are the following themes;

- The importance of preparedness
- Challenge, and stepping outside one's comfort zone
- Resilience in the face of challenges
- Teamwork
- Effective communication
- Growth and positive mind sets
- Celebrating successes

The three lessons ***The Challenge, The Team, and The Lessons*** are designed to be taught in sequence, highlighting to students the three key areas covered by each of the three 20 minute ***Crossing the Empty Quarter*** video clips. Teachers are encouraged to allow their students opportunities to explore the lessons' content in an uninstrutive fashion. Many of the lesson activities lend themselves to open-ended

questions and discussions, and students will gain much from opportunities to think emphatically and independently.

Both Mohamed and Mark work at **Outward Bound Oman** (www.outwardboundoman.com), which is part of the Outward Bound International community (www.outwardbound.net), a not-for-profit organisation leading the way in outdoor learning for young people. Outward Bound Oman courses are designed to not only challenge participants physically, but to also teach them life-long skills in areas not traditionally taught in schools and colleges, skills that are considered essential to succeeding in life, securing employment and performing in the workplace. Outward Bound Oman trains more than 3,000 young people each year in Oman, from government schools and colleges, to job seekers and people in the early years of employment. Each week of the year, three or four teams can be found on Jebel Akdhar, or in the Sharqiya Sands, undertaking challenging four-day courses in places where mobile phones do not work. Outward Bound Oman courses aim to build confidence, resilience, communication and teamwork skills, and provide a unique, life changing opportunity for participants to reflect on their own performance.