

Through the Desert

A Game by
Reiner Knizia

Players: 2-5 Age: 10 and up Duration: 20-45 minutes

THE DESERT COMES ALIVE!

Five Bedouin tribes are beginning to inhabit the empty desert. They establish caravans, occupy water holes and link oases, while enclosing desert areas, thereby gaining points. In each round, you place two camels on the board. But which caravans should you develop to establish yourself as the most successful lord of the desert?

GAME OBJECTIVE

Guide your caravans wisely to earn the most points.

GAME COMPONENTS

- 1 board
- 170 camels (34 in each of five camel shades)
 - 5 gray-shaded camels
- 30 riders (6 in each of five player colors)
 - 5 oases (palm trees)
- 45 water holes (15 each of 1, 2 & 3 points)
- 20 oasis chips (5 points)
- 10 area chips (10 points)
 - 5 caravan chips (10 points)
 - 5 caravan chips (5 points)

Note: The camel shades are pastel colors not typical of many camels! Each player, however, uses riders of one distinct color, all different from the camel shades. This helps players to keep a good overview as the game progresses.

GAME PREPARATION

- Before the first game, carefully punch out the pieces from the surrounding card.
- Lay out the board. It depicts the originally empty desert enclosed by mountain ranges, with another mountain range in the middle. In a four- and five-player game, the whole of the board is utilized. With two or three players the smaller section, separated by a dark line, is not used.
- Each player receives six riders in one player color, and one camel in each of the five camel shades. In addition, each player receives a gray camel.
- The players seat their riders on each of their six camels. The rider on the gray camel is placed in front of each player, indicating which color they play. In a five-player game, each player selects a different shade of camel to discard, together with the rider, so that each player has only four camel of shades in play.
- All other camels are separated by shade and placed beside the board. In a two-player game, discard ten camels of each shade. In a three-player game, five camels of each shade are discarded.
- The five palm trees are placed on any five different spaces on the board showing the palm tree symbol, thereby creating oases.
- The water holes are shuffled and placed face-up onto each space of the board marked with a circle. Water holes are also placed onto the unoccupied palm tree spaces. In a two- or three-player game, when the smaller board is used, the superfluous water holes are discarded.
- The oasis chips, area chips and caravan chips are placed face-up beside the board.
- The youngest player begins. Play proceeds clockwise.

POSITIONING RIDERS

The game begins with five positioning rounds, in which players position their riders on the board. (With five players, there are only four rounds). In clockwise order, each player positions one of his seated riders with the respective camel (in short 'camel-riders') onto an empty space of the board. The camel-riders may be positioned on any space with the following exceptions:

- not on a space containing a water hole, an oasis or another camel-rider,
- not on one of the six spaces adjacent to an oasis,
- not on a space adjacent to another camel-rider (regardless of the shade of the camel).

In the first positioning round, each player must position a camel-rider with a different shaded camel, if possible.

When all players have positioned their camel-riders on the board, players then start to develop their caravans.

Hint: The careful positioning of your camel-riders is vital to your success in the game. Therefore, in your first game, attempt to distribute your camel-riders evenly over the board, into areas not too close to other camel-riders.

DEVELOPMENT OF CARAVANS: OVERVIEW

From now on, every round each player places two camels onto the board (with the exception of the first of these rounds - see below). Initially, a camel is placed adjacent to the player's rider of the camel of that shade. Subsequently new camels are placed adjacent to any camel of that shade belonging to the player. In this way caravans are formed and extended. Each player attempts to develop their caravans to score points. Points are scored for occupying water holes, linking oases, enclosing areas and having the largest caravan of a shade. The game ends when the last camel of one shade is played.

PLACING CAMELS

- On his turn a player takes two camels and places each of them on any empty space, or onto a space containing a water hole. The two camels may be of the same or of different shades.
- A camel must be placed onto a space adjacent to a camel of the same shade belonging to the player's own caravan (identified by the camel-rider of his color). For example, a pastel-blue camel must be placed adjacent to a pastel-blue camel of a player's own caravan.
- Hence for each shade, a player possesses only one caravan, and all camels of that caravan are linked.
- Between two camels of the same shade, but belonging to two different players, there must always remain one space which cannot be occupied by any camel of that shade. In other words, a player must not place a camel onto a space adjacent to a camel of the same shade belonging to a different player.
- Camels may be placed adjacent to camels of different shades (regardless of whom they belong to).



Example: The diagram shows the Green player has a choice of nine spaces on which to place a pastel-yellow camel. He places two pastel-yellow camels. The "!" marks an illegal placement of a pastel-yellow camel.

SPECIAL RULE FOR THE FIRST PLAYING ROUND

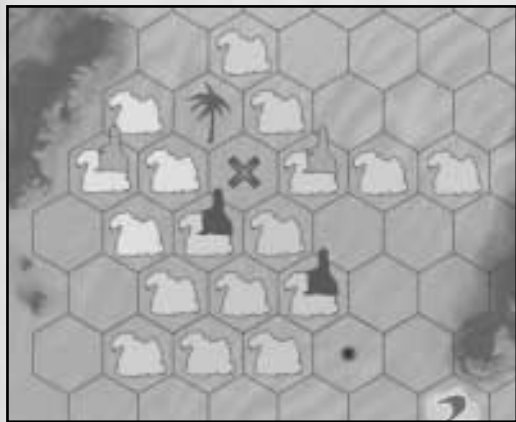
In the first camel-placing round, the first two players may only place one camel. In a two-player game, this only applies to the first player. This ensures that the starting players do not gain an undue advantage.

OCCUPYING WATER HOLES

When a player places a camel onto a space with a water hole (worth 1, 2 or 3 points) he removes the water hole from the board and places it face-down in front of him.

LINKING OASES

- When a player places a camel onto one of the six neighboring spaces of an oasis (palm tree), he takes an oasis chip (worth 5 points) and places it face-down in front of him.
- If a player places another camel of the same caravan adjacent to the same oasis, he does not receive another oasis chip. Each caravan can only score one chip per oasis. However, a player may reach several different oases with one caravan, receiving one oasis chip for each of them.
- If a player reaches the same oasis with a caravan of a different shade, he again receives an oasis chip.
- Of course, several players can link their caravans to the same oasis (even with the same shades), each of them receiving an oasis chip.



Example: The Red player can no longer link his pastel-green caravan to the oasis. However, he can link his pastel-violet caravan.

Hint: Watch your opponents' caravans carefully, or else you might be cut off from linking to an oasis! Always remember that you cannot extend your caravan onto a space that is adjacent to another caravan of the same shade.

ENCLOSING AREAS

When a player places a camel such that he encloses an area of one or more spaces with a single caravan, he takes possession of that area. The following rules apply:

- The player must place camels of one shade in such a way that, with the assistance of the edge of the board or the mountain range in the middle, they form an uninterrupted chain. It is possible to enclose an area with camels only, without the help of the edge of the board or the mountain range in the middle.
- It is not possible to enclose an area using caravans of different shades.
- An enclosed area may not contain any other camels (irrespective of who they belong to).
- If the enclosed area contains any water holes, the player removes them immediately and places them face-down in front of him. He does not have to occupy these spaces with his camels.
- If the enclosed area contains oases, which have not yet been reached by a camel of the enclosing caravan, the player immediately receives one (5 point) oasis chip for each such oasis. He does not have to link his caravan to the enclosed oases.
- It is impossible for another player to place camels into an enclosed area.



Example: The area is not yet enclosed. It is surrounded by two different caravans belonging to the blue player. Blue places two pastel-violet camels and encloses the area. He receives the two water holes and one oasis chip.

Hint: By enclosing areas you score useful numbers of points. First, by taking water holes and oasis chips, and then later by scoring area points. Always try to prevent your opponents from enclosing large and valuable areas.

GAME END AND SCORING

The game ends when, at the completion of a player's turn, the last camel of one shade has been placed on the board. Then for each shade, it is determined which players have the largest caravan of the shade (the greatest number of camels in one particular shade). This player receives a ten-point caravan chip for that shade. If there are two or more players, each of who have placed the largest number of camels in that shade, each of them receives a five-point caravan chip. The ten-point chip is not awarded for that shade.

Hint: Always ensure, throughout the game, that you have the most camels in one, or even two shades. Watch those players who come dangerously close and extend your caravan in time. A caravan does not have to be especially large to win the caravan chip - just bigger than any of your opponents' caravans!

Next, the value of each player's enclosed areas is determined: one point is scored for each empty space of an enclosed area (but not for an oasis space). *In the example above, the pastel-violet player receives 13 points.* These points are paid out with the help of ten-point area chips, change being taken from other chips or water holes.

Finally, each player totals the value of his chips. The player with the highest total wins. In the case of a tie, there are several winners.

Credits

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