

In October I spent a week in the Sinai Desert, hosted by the Makhad Trust and people of the Muzeina Bedouin tribe. The journey included a three-day solitary retreat, hosted by the Desert itself.



What can I bring back for you from the Desert? If there is one thing, it would be the sense of being part of a greater whole.

- ◆ I looked at the rocks and saw how they were formed of hardened sand. In parts, the rocks were crumbling, and I saw how they would return to sand, after a few millennia in rock form. Sand to sand.
- ◆ I heard how the Bedouin of the past, when they knew their time had come to die, would go out in the sand, lie down, their hands folded over the chest, and wait for the moment of death. Their loved ones would simply know where to find them the next day, and bury them there, in the sand. Dust to dust.
- ◆ Each morning I took a sand bath, rubbing sand into my skin. Silica to silica.
- ◆ I slept, nestled against the rocks, sheltered and included, a part, though tiny, of that vast, embracing landscape. Mother to child.



It's harder to feel such kinship with cement and brick, plastic and glass. Perhaps that's why, in London, I feel so often alienated: from the earth, from my body, from people around me, from my own emotions and sources of joy.

But I recognise the Desert inside me now: silica in my skin, silence in my eyes,
vastness in my heart, embrace in my limbs.

All this I would like to bring back for you from the Desert.

Tania Coke

