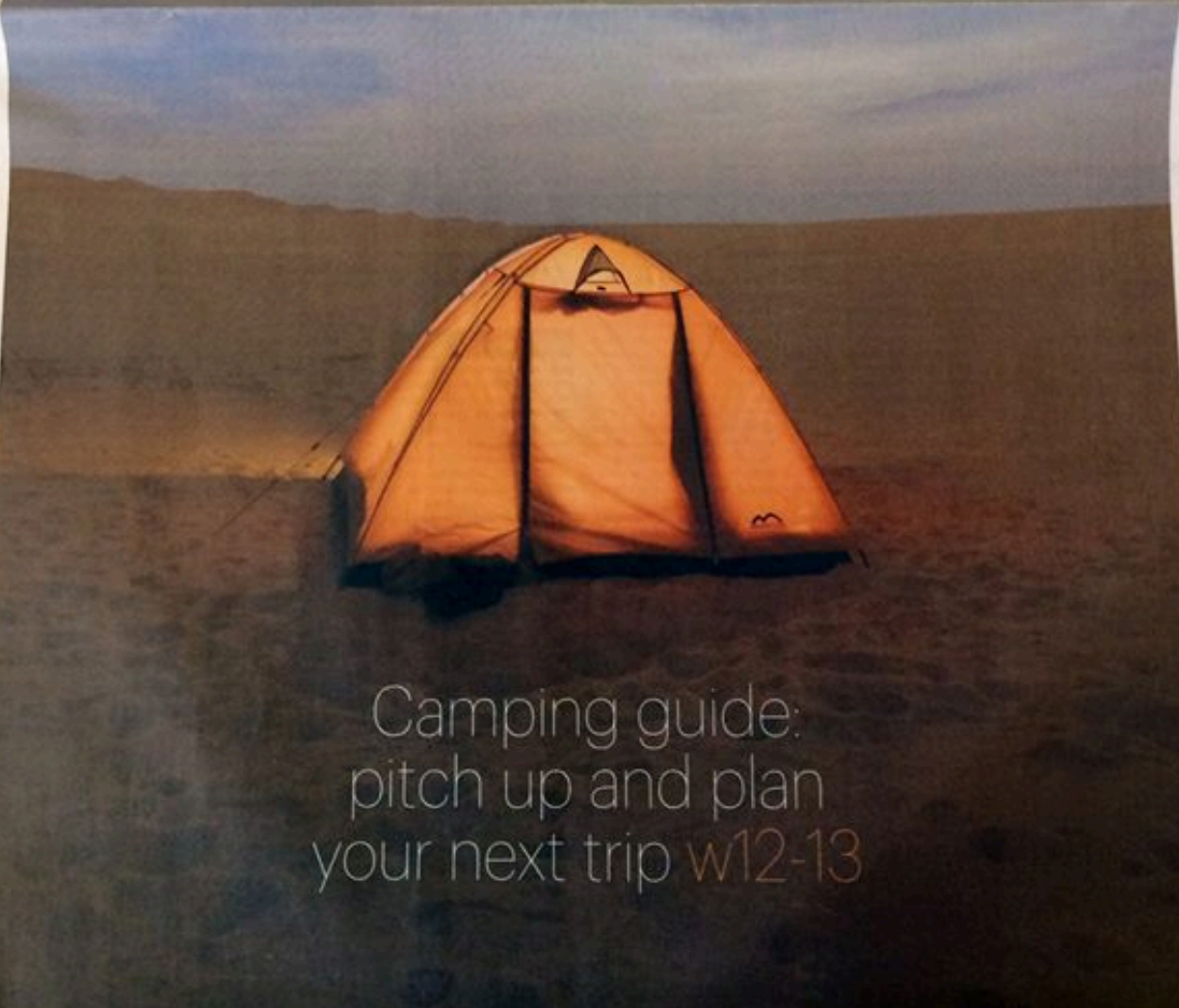
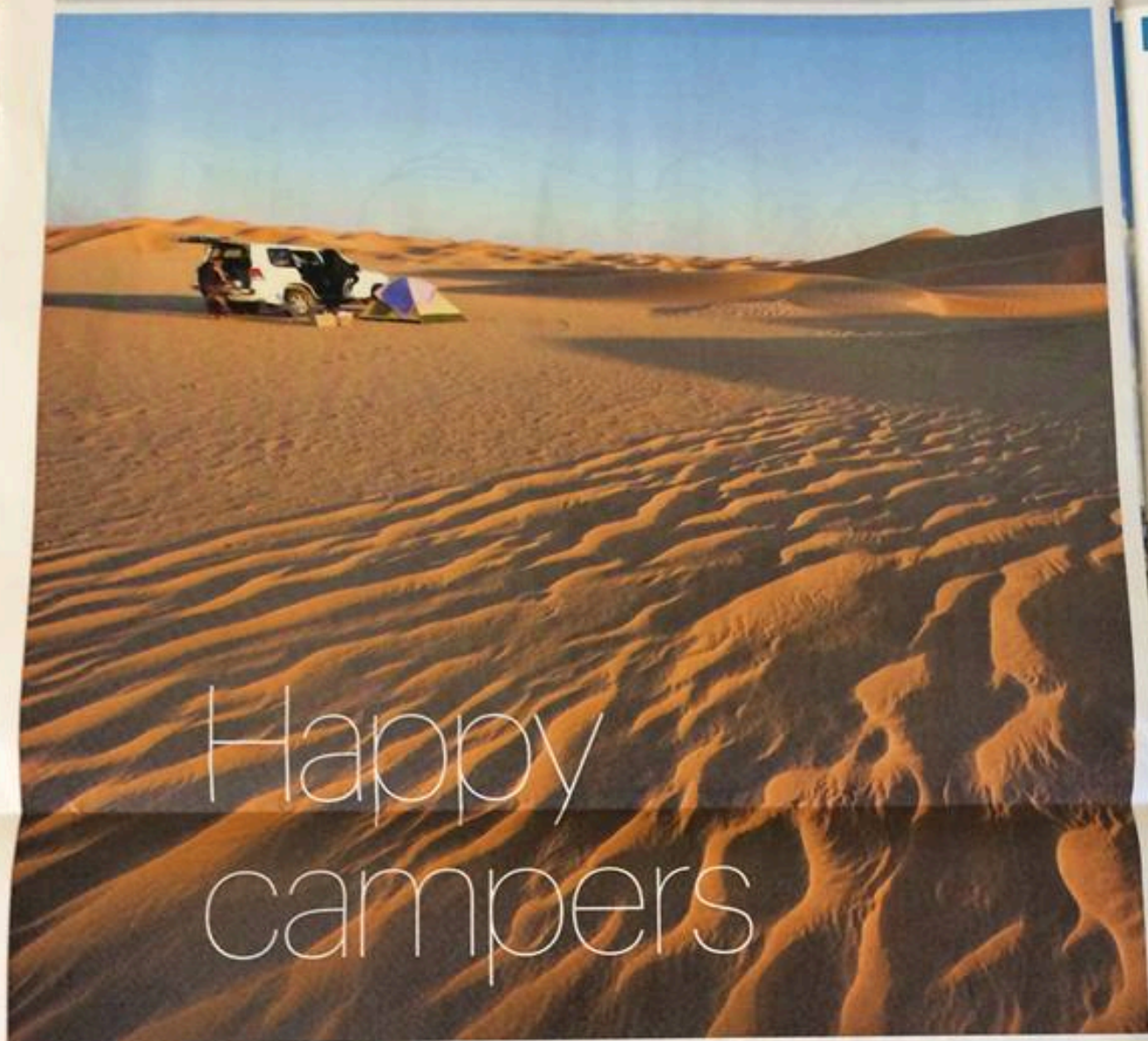


Enjoy our Christmas-themed puzzles w10-11

# weekend



Camping guide:  
pitch up and plan  
your next trip w12-13



# Happy campers

Everyone needs to try camping at least once in their life. The feeling of freedom and peace that you get from just a one-night trip could even change your perspective on life," says Luke Wilson, the founder/owner of Wild Arabia, which runs discovery and camping tours across the UAE and Oman. "It's also an insane amount of fun and possibly the best way to make new friends or just spend some excellent quality time with existing ones. Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah both have decent spots for camping, but if you're willing to go a bit farther afield towards Musandam, there are some amazing spots around both Khasab and Dibba."

From rocky mountains to deserted beaches, the region's diverse and rugged terrain provides some excellent backdrops for

With winter finally here, pitching a tent is a perfect way to appreciate the great outdoors. Cheryl Parsons gets expert advice on how to do it right

setting up camp - whether you're a novice or a camping pro.

Ivana Chiles and her husband Darryl are self-confessed camping addicts. "I enjoy the total disconnection from the city, pollution-free air and the freedom I feel. I was brought up in the countryside [in the Czech Republic], and miss the silence and constant contact with nature," says Ivana, a health coach and founder of Health Powerhouse, who has been living in the UAE for 16 years. "At night, there is complete silence unless some goats or donkeys come to sniff around for some food. We wake up very early once the birds start chirping, and we always have a hike planned."

For Darryl, escaping the rat race is one of the biggest attractions: "We leave our mobile phones locked in our car glovebox, and share stories around the campfire instead. We enjoy a mix of camping, from the 'luxury' of camping out of the back of our car, with tents, tables and double mattresses, to the bare-bone bivouacs at the top of the some of the UAE's highest peaks." (A bivouac is an improvised, temporary structure that provides little or no shelter - if you ever tried to make a tent out of a blanket in your garden as a child, and pretended to camp out, then this is a form of bivouacking.)

"The UAE is great, because you can generally set up camp anywhere," says Ivana. "If you have a four-wheel-drive, then you can take a drive off road down one of the wadi tracks leading to some of the small villages at the foot of the mountain ranges - this will usually take you past some suitable spots. The farther you explore, the less traffic you will find to disturb you during your stay."

The Chileses are not alone in their love for camping. The Dubai-based amateur photographer



From rocky mountains to deserted beaches, the region's diverse and rugged terrain provides some excellent backdrops for setting up camp

Ibrahim Albeshrani goes camping three or four times per year. "I go with friends or sometimes with random people," the 36-year-old says. "It gets you closer to people and nature, and teaches you the value of Mother Nature - and it is so much fun."

If you have children, open beaches and deserts provide the ultimate playground. One Abu Dhabi resident, Moira Prentice, and her family are camping veterans, having taken their children on trips around the UAE. "I love the silence, the stars and good companionship around the campfire," says Prentice. "When my kids were smaller, they had lots of fun [camping], especially sliding down the dunes. They also liked having important and semi-dangerous chores such as lighting and tending the fire."

When it comes to choosing a spot to pitch, common sense prevails, says Wilson. "In the UAE, there are very few restrictions on camping, so you can pretty much pick any spot with suitable terrain, as long as it is not within the grounds of a hotel, in a private residential area or too close to the road."



clockwise from top, camping in the desert in Oman; Darryl Chiles preparing breakfast in Musandam, Oman; and with his wife, Ivana, camping next to the water in Musandam. Courtesy Ivana and Darryl Chiles.

hot spots



**Ras Al Khaimah**  
The UAE's tallest mountain, Jebel Jan, is a fantastic place to visit, with spectacular scenery, breathtaking views and a hair-raising cliff road to take you to the peak. There are plenty of quiet spots to pitch a tent, although it can get quite packed on holiday weekends.



**Khasab, Musandam (Oman)**  
Take a dhow from the boatyard at Khasab Port, and head out to one of the many beaches dotted along as you enter the fjords. Turquoise waters, white limestone cliffs and the chance to dolphin-watch make this a stunning camping spot. Make sure you pack your passport because you will need it to pass the border and have the relevant rental-car insurance that is required.

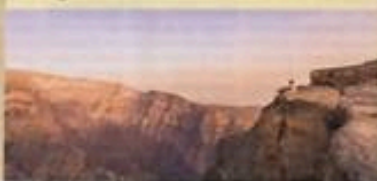
**Fujairah**  
Head up the east coast, and you're likely to see a number of tents dotting the beaches close to Fujairah's main hotel strip. There's a sandy area just to the right of Sandy Beach Hotel & Resort and opposite Snoopy Island - both popular camping spots. It's close to beaches and availability of water sports - a great choice for families.



**Al Dhaid**  
Al Dhaid Road is flanked by an abundance of sandy dunes, which provide the perfect base for a spot of off-roading or camping. Head towards Sharjah from Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Road (formerly known as Emirates Road), then take Al Dhaid Road that passes Sharjah International Airport. Pick a quiet spot to set up your site.



**Oman**  
Jebel Shams is part of the Hajar Mountains in north-eastern Oman. Here, it's all about the views and trekking, with stunning photo opportunities around what is known as the Oman Grand Canyon. There's an excellent hiking trail along Jebel Shams, which takes approximately four hours. Camping on the peaks is possible, but not advisable unless you're experienced. You can set up camp at the base, or in the grounds of one of the hotels for a fee - a good choice for novice campers.



what to bring (besides your tent)



Essentials

- **Bin bags** - There's absolutely no excuse for leaving any rubbish while camping
- **An up-to-date map/off-road guide**
- **Lightweight sleeping mat** - There are some great ones that weigh 200g to 300g and help to keep you insulated from the cold ground.
- **Lightweight sleeping bag** - Depending on the season and altitude this can vary in insulation.
- **Four-wheel-drive** - A must for navigating the dunes. Make sure you fuel up before you go, and check your tyre pressure, too, because petrol stations are often few and far between.
- **Firewood and matches/lighter** - A campfire is a place to relax round after a hard hike, and can be used to cook on - and keep you warm, if needed. Firewood must be kept at least 4.5 metres away from your tent, and burning coal should never be left unattended at night.
- **A cool box** - To keep your perishables chilled.
- **Camping stove and burner** - Keep it a safe distance from your tent.
- **Food and water** - Don't underestimate the amount of water you will need. In some remote parts, there are no shops to buy supplies.

Non-essentials/luxuries

- **Insect repellent**
- **Torch and spare batteries**
- **Swiss army knife**
- **First-aid kit** - Make sure you have plasters and antiseptic spray.
- **Water gear** - Include snorkel equipment, a paddleboard, fishing gear etc for beach camping.
- **Warm clothing** - Temperatures can plummet during the winter months, with ice and snow common in some remote parts of the region.
- **Inflatable mattress/pillow** - It might sound like glamping, but a blow-up bed can do wonders to help avoid backache in the morning.
- **Camping chairs**

Get the gear

- **Adventure HQ**, Times Square Center, The Beach, JBR and Yas Mall; [www.adventurehq.ae](http://www.adventurehq.ae)
- **Tactical Trading**, next to Harley-Davidson showrooms, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai; [www.tacticaltrading.com](http://www.tacticaltrading.com)
- **Duff Camping**, online store that delivers to your door; [www.gulfcamping.com](http://www.gulfcamping.com)
- **Also try** Go Sport, Ace Hardware, Decathlon and Carrefour.

