

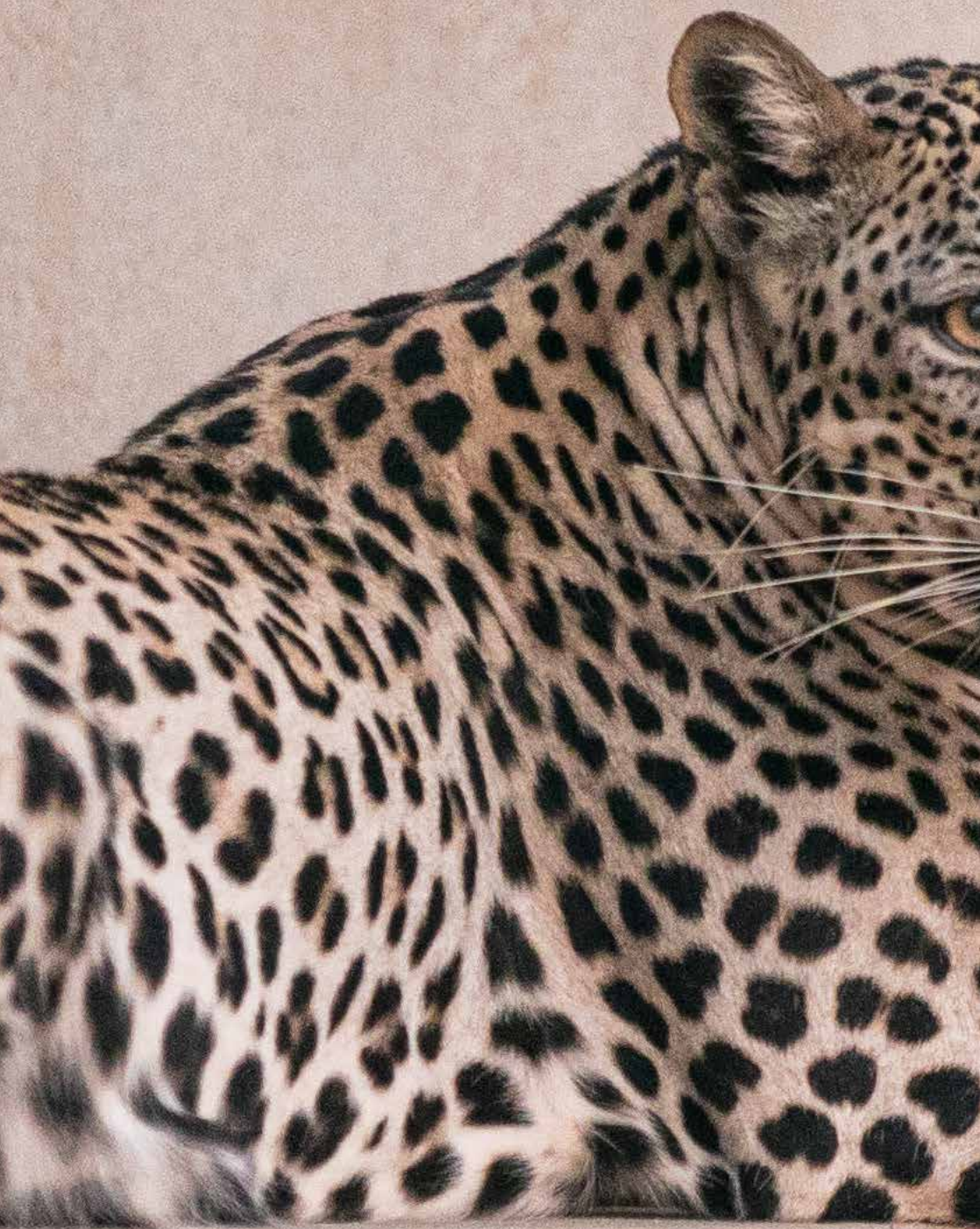
CATWALK  TRAILS

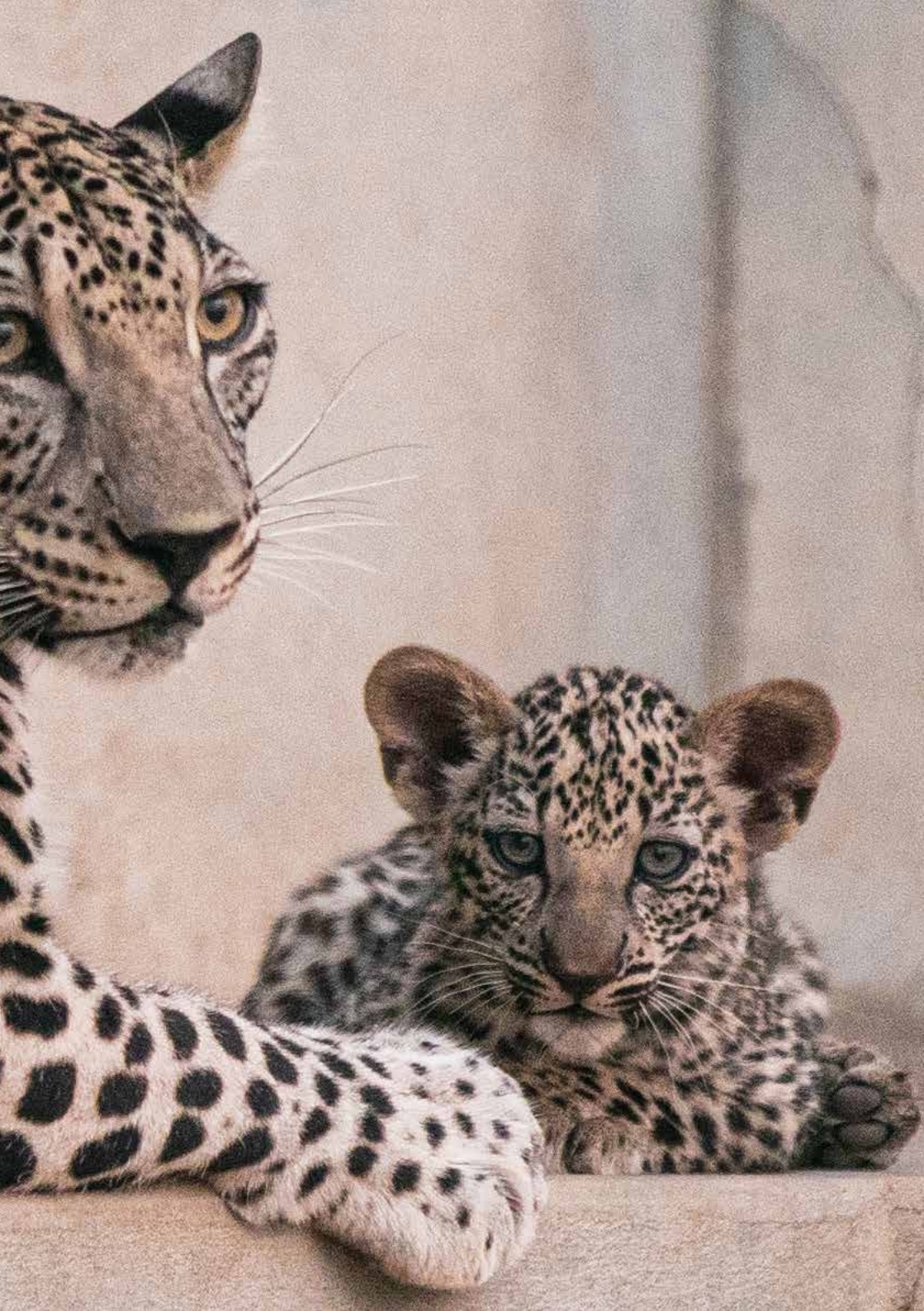
ARABIAN LEOPARD

CELEBRATION TRAIL

ALULA







WELCOME TO THE ARABIAN LEOPARD CELEBRATION TRAIL **ALULA**

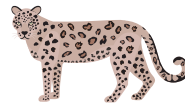
The Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail in AlUla is one of several trails launching all over the world. Known as the Catwalk Trails, this network of wild walks is positioned to raise awareness about Big Cat conservation and underscore that all of our wellbeing is interconnected.

Located in the beautiful Sharaan Nature Reserve in AlUla, the location of the Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail has been carefully selected. This walk is not far from where Arabian Leopards may one day be reintroduced into the wild.

This Trail offers a unique glimpse into the Sharaan Nature Reserve, with stunning wildlife, and spectacular views, that can be enjoyed at different times of the day.

At 7km long, the Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail covers a huge range of landscapes in the nature reserve. You will see sandy dunes, hidden gullies, and the beautiful formations that are iconic to AlUla.

This booklet is your guide to some of the unique natural history to look or listen out for whilst walking the Trail.



This guide explains
how the ecosystem where
the Trail is located
is an ideal habitat for
Arabian Leopards.



CONTENT

ROYAL COMMISSION FOR ALULA
+ CATMOSPHERE.ORG

LOCATION

SHARAAN NATURE RESERVE, ALULA
SAUDI ARABIA

IMAGES

ROYAL COMMISSION FOR ALULA
+ CATMOSPHERE.ORG
+ ALI ALENEZI





CATWALK TRAILS
ARABIAN LEOPARD
CELEBRATION TRAIL
ALULA

@catmospherenow

ABOUT THE ARABIAN LEOPARD

The Arabian Leopard is the smallest of the Leopard subspecies. Listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN, it was once found across the Arabian Peninsula, but today, can only be found in Oman, Yemen, and possibly parts of Saudi Arabia.

This small carnivore is a solitary animal, avoiding contact with humans. It lives in a range of mountainous terrains, including dry and rocky scrub lands as well as woodlands with water available all year round.

Sadly the Arabian Leopard is threatened with extinction. Habitat loss, human interaction, and ecological breakdown have all contributed to its decline.

Populations have shrunk so much that today there are thought to be less than 200 individuals alive in the wild.

At one point Saudi Arabia was home to a thriving population of Arabian Leopards, with recorded historical encounters showing that this was a much admired animal. Unfortunately, if they still survive within the country today it is only in isolated pockets, with no verified sightings since 2014.

Through the work of the Royal Commission for AlUla, and their partners, there is hope. Saudi Arabia has an active Arabian Leopard breeding programme underway, and the restoration of the ecosystem in AlUla for the reintroduction of the subspecies has already begun. One day soon, these magnificent creatures will once again roam these beautiful lands.

ARABIAN LEOPARD RANGE MAP



- CONFIRMED
- PROBABLE/POSSIBLE
- ▨ HISTORIC

ABOUT SHARAAN NATURE RESERVE

Covering an area the size of London, the Sharaan Nature Reserve spans over 1,500km² of protected land. Within it are an incredible range of landscapes, from unique rock formations to sandy desert, providing the home to a diverse range of wildlife.

Open areas are lush with plants after the rains, a source of food for lots of herbivores. The rock formations provide a safer home for many species of mammals and lizards. There are wolves, sand cats, hawks and vultures, and a wonderful array of reptiles including snakes and several species of lizards.

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) has been working with the local community to restore the ecosystem of AlUla, so that the Arabian Leopard can be reintroduced one day.

Over 100,000 seedlings of 25 different native plant species have been planted. This is really important as food for herbivores, and RCU has reintroduced over 300 large herbivores. The ecosystem is being restored to the richness it recently enjoyed. And soon, the Arabian Leopard will return to its home where it once thrived.



This beautiful nature reserve is enjoyed by us, but it is also the home of a huge variety of wildlife.

Please help us keep it clean for the animals by taking any rubbish with you when you leave.

A photograph of a desert landscape featuring a large, green acacia tree in the center. The ground is rocky and reddish-brown, with some sparse vegetation. The sky is clear and blue. A circular graphic with two concentric lines, one orange and one white, is overlaid on the tree. The word "WELCOME" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters inside the circle.

WELCOME

**WHAT MIGHT YOU
ENCOUNTER
ON THE
ARABIAN LEOPARD
CELEBRATION TRAIL?**



WILDLIFE



**GEOLOGICAL
FORMATIONS**



**ROCK
CARVINGS**



PLANTS

LOOK OUT FOR
ARABIAN
LEOPARD
GATE

WHERE
TRAIL START

Our Trail begins by a rock outcrop that looks very familiar. The naturally weathered sandstone is shaped like a crouching Leopard.

The sandstone itself was formed long before Leopards were here. Between 500 million and 480 million years ago, enormous amounts of sand were deposited. The grains in the rock show that they were laid down on shallow beaches.

These beaches were where the sea level is today, and it was pushed deep down into the earth, where the sediment turned to rock. Tectonic activity pushed these preserved beaches up, creating large mountains that have been slowly eroding for over 15 million years.





Under an overhang like this, Arabian Leopards leave messages for each other by scraping in the sand or with scat (droppings).

This distinctively shaped rock has been formed by natural erosion from wind, water, and even ice on the cold desert nights.

LOOK OUT FOR
PLANTS

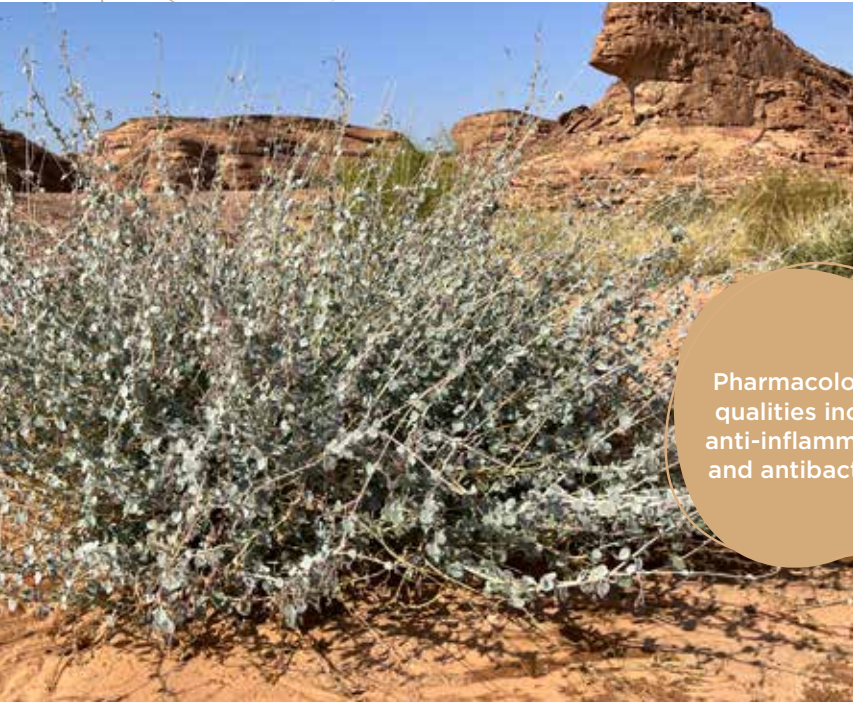
WHERE
TRAIL START

Ephedra foliata has very chunky stems, giving it the common name of 'shrubby horsetail'.



SHRUBBY
HORSETAIL





Pharmacological qualities include anti-inflammatory and antibacterial.



PERGULARIA TOMENTOSA

Pergularia tomentosa is a small shrub with branches covered in white-blue leaves. The sap is quite thick and has an almost milky texture.



POISONOUS!

Please don't touch.

LOOK OUT FOR
WILDLIFE TRACKS

WHERE
THROUGHOUT THE TRAIL

Wildlife in these parts is shy, and you may not encounter animals. However you may find evidence of their presence.



**WOLF
TRACKS**



BIRD TRACKS



Arabian Leopards have distinctive tracks that scientists can see in soft sand like this.

ANIMAL TRACK TIP!

When taking photos of animal tracks, place an item in your shot that allows you to understand the scale. A ruler would be best but a mobile phone or even your own hand will do!




LOOK OUT FOR ACACIA TREES

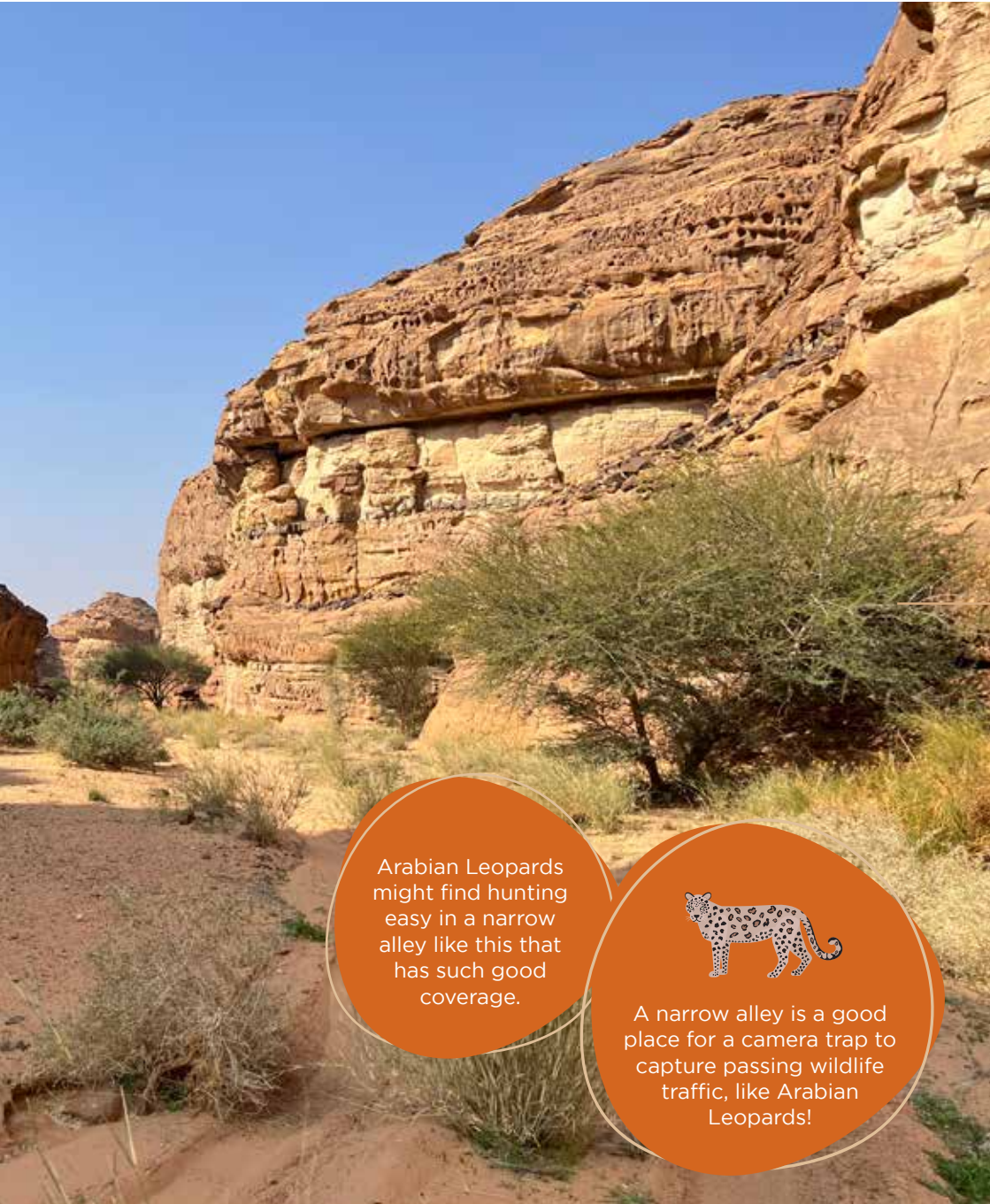
WHERE ACACIA ALLEY

Acacia trees (belonging to the Genus Acacia), are well adapted to hot, dry climates, and can be found across Africa and even as far away as Australia.

The hardened sap of various species of the acacia tree is known as acacia gum. The sap from this tough, small tree is used to thicken food, as a binder in water colour paints, and is an additive to ceramic glazes.



Loose yourself in Acacia Alley with the rocks and the trees. Close your eyes and feel the silence of the stunning land.



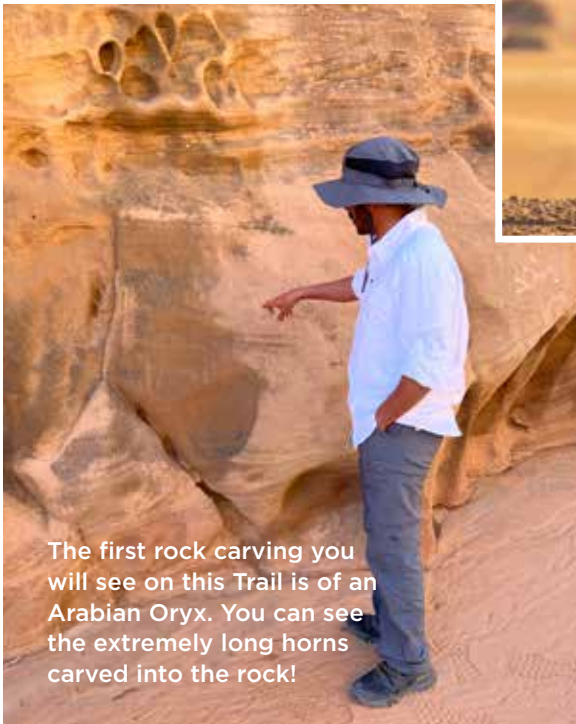
Arabian Leopards might find hunting easy in a narrow alley like this that has such good coverage.



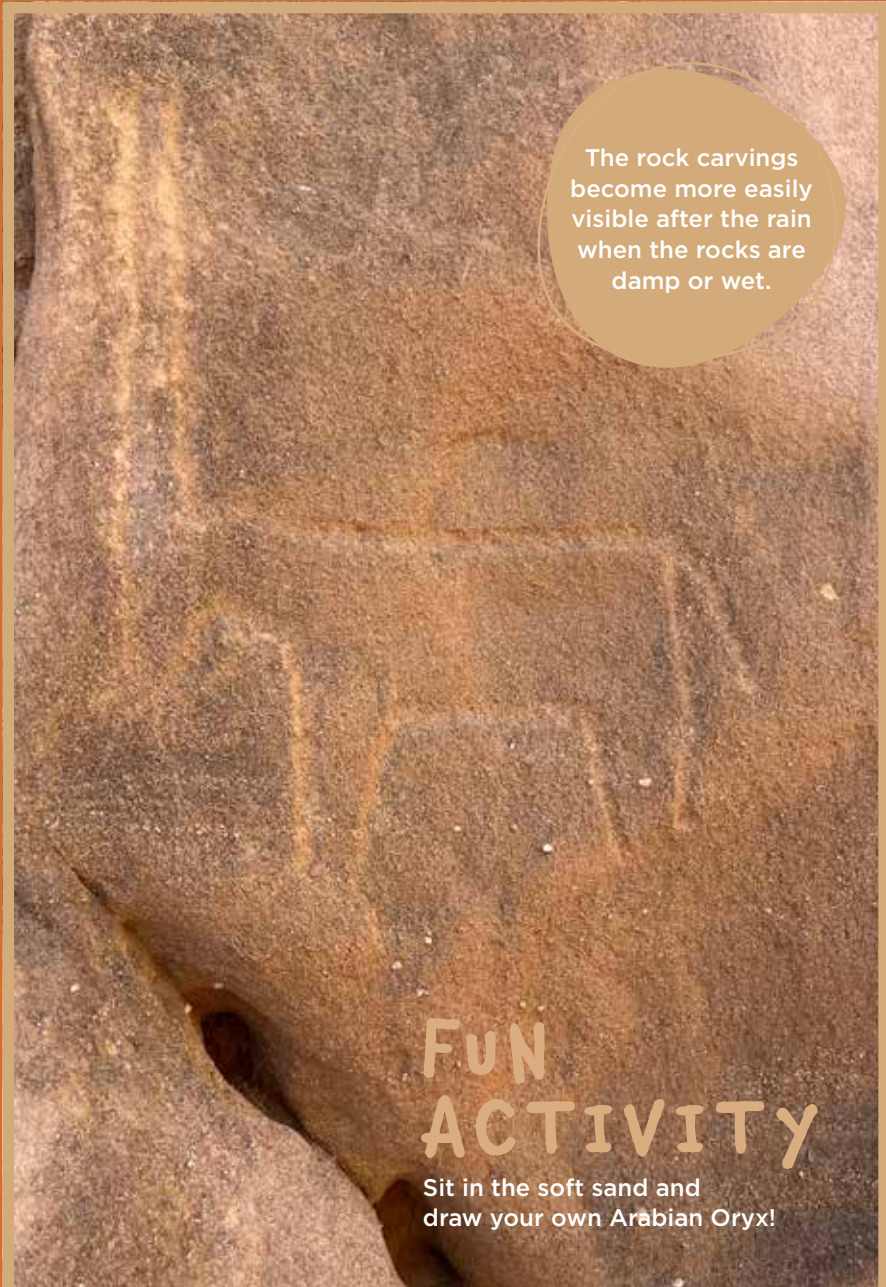
A narrow alley is a good place for a camera trap to capture passing wildlife traffic, like Arabian Leopards!

LOOK OUT FOR
ARABIAN ORYX
ROCK CARVING

WHERE
ACACIA ALLEY



The first rock carving you will see on this Trail is of an Arabian Oryx. You can see the extremely long horns carved into the rock!



The rock carvings
become more easily
visible after the rain
when the rocks are
damp or wet.

FUN ACTIVITY

Sit in the soft sand and
draw your own Arabian Oryx!

LOOK OUT FOR
PLANTS

WHERE
WADI AL SRAYAT

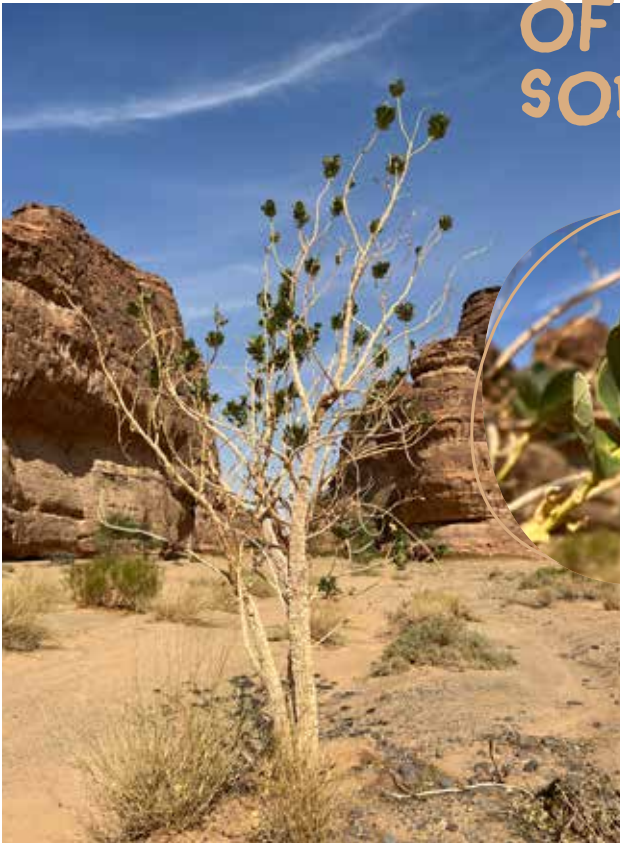


FICUS

Ficus is an evergreen tree that is native to Saudi Arabia and many parts of Africa. Known in Arabic as athab, it loves to grow close to the cliffs in valleys (or wadis). Protected from the sun at the edge of the rocks, they also collect moisture each morning as the dew drips down the rock faces.

The common name for *Calotropis procera* is the 'Apple of Sodom', and it is a highly poisonous plant that has been referenced in literature (both biblical and in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) and music (Marilyn Manson recorded a song with this name for the David Lynch movie *Lost Highway*). The green fruits, that look like a white hedgehog inside, have a very milky sap, which turns sticky over time.

'APPLE OF SODOM'



POISONOUS!
Please don't touch.



LOOK OUT FOR WILDLIFE

WHERE WADI AL SRAYAT

Rock Hyraxes are living relatives of elephants and manatees and, like these larger mammals, they have tusks. They are the prey of wolves and many types of eagles. For protection, they live in dens in rock crevices, and are mostly active around dawn and dusk.



LAUGHING DOVE

The Laughing Dove belongs to the pigeon family, and lives in AIUla all year round, so you may see one on the trail.





TUSKED MAMMAL

JUST LIKE THE
ELEPHANT AND
MANATEE



Rock Hyraxes are
one of the main prey
species for Arabian
Leopards.



GREEN BEE-EATER

If you are very lucky,
you might spot the
vibrant colours of a
Green Bee-Eater
flash by.

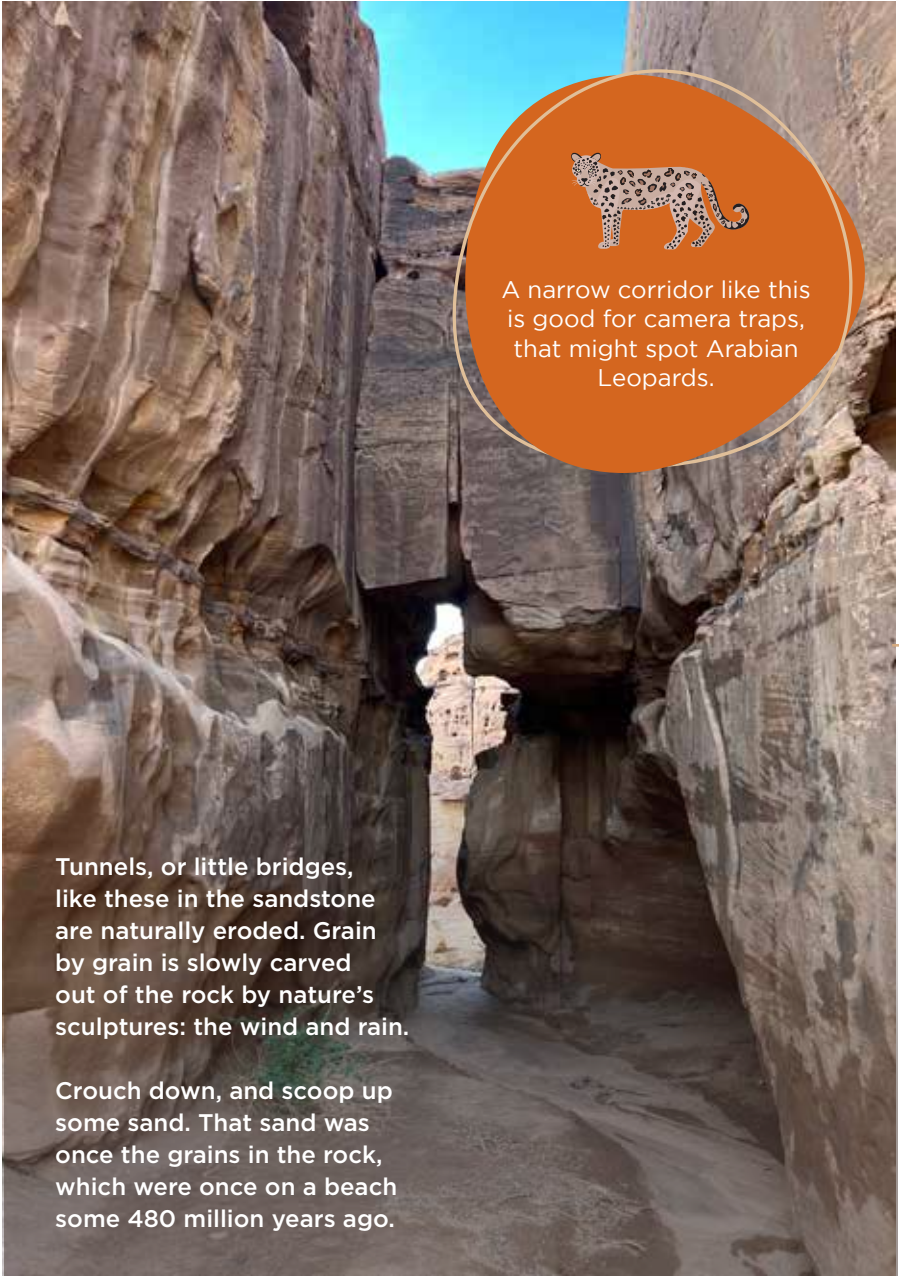
LOOK OUT FOR
**GEOLOGICAL
FORMATIONS:
TUNNEL**

WHERE
**WADI
AL SRAYAT**

This tunnel
was formed by
hundreds of years
of erosion by
wind and rain.



You will see places where nature has carved through rocks. A small fracture in the sandstone is a place where water and wind can enter, and slowly, over millennia, carves out the rock. These places provide stunning windows into the nature reserve.



A narrow corridor like this is good for camera traps, that might spot Arabian Leopards.

Tunnels, or little bridges, like these in the sandstone are naturally eroded. Grain by grain is slowly carved out of the rock by nature's sculptures: the wind and rain.

Crouch down, and scoop up some sand. That sand was once the grains in the rock, which were once on a beach some 480 million years ago.

LOOK OUT FOR PLANTS: DESERT SQUASH

WHERE WADI AL SRAYAT

The desert squash (*Citrullus colocynthis*) grows outwards, spreading across the desert floor. The fruits look like little melons, but they do not taste like melons. They are mentioned in the King James Bible as the 'Vines of Sodom', because of their extremely bitter taste.

The oils from these fresh little desert balls can be used for soap. They can even be used when they are dried out, as an excellent fuel for fires.

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Citrullus colocynthis

COMMON NAME

Desert Squash
or Bitter Apple






LOOK OUT FOR
HORSE & CAMEL
ROCK CARVINGS

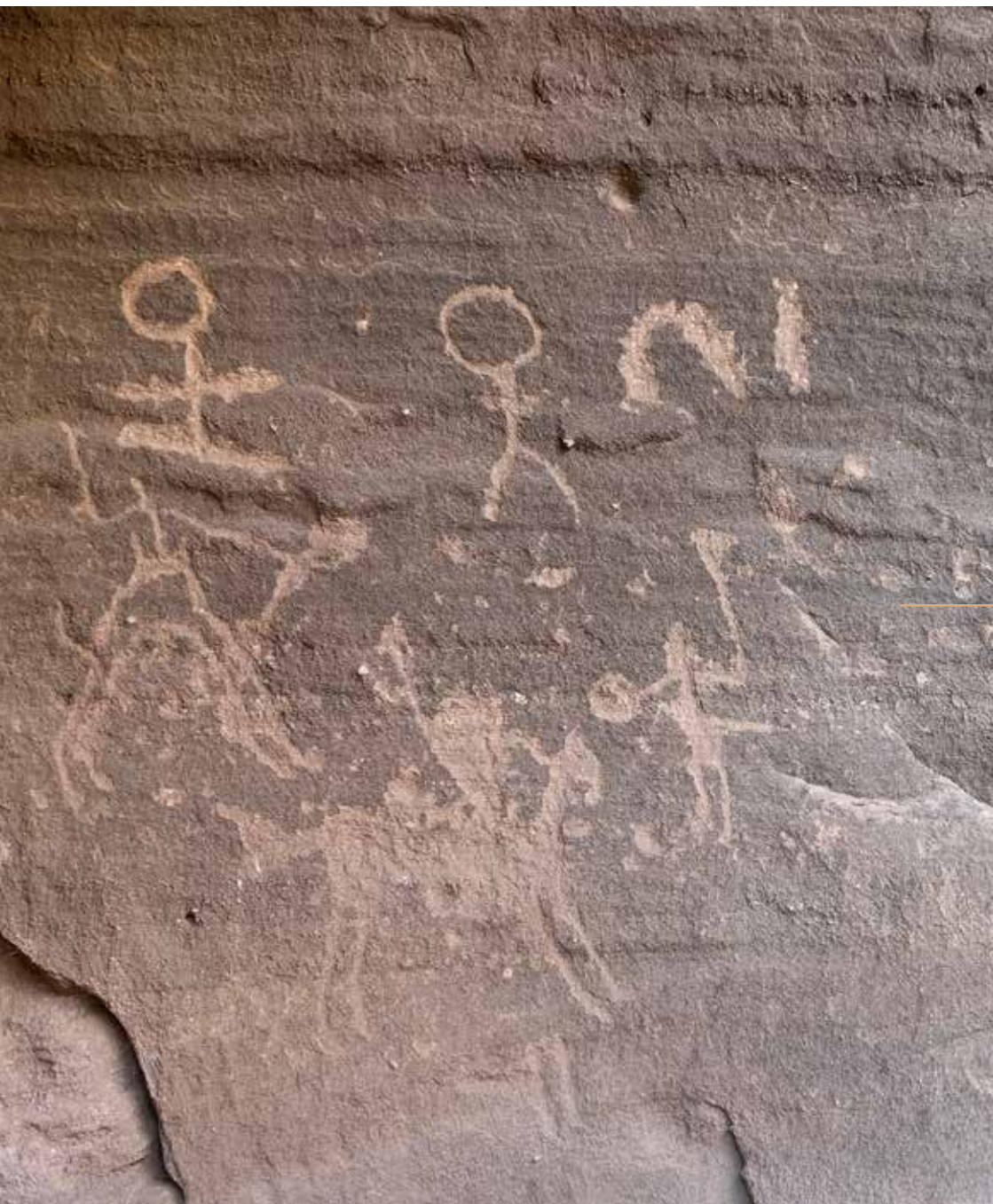
WHERE
WADI AL SRAYAT

These rock carvings are around 4,000 years old. People from tribes would carve into the rocks leaving a message for other tribe members.

Can you see the symbol in the top right of this photo? It looks like a key. This is the symbol that told people who the tribe were, a little like a family surname.



What animals can you see in this rock carving?



LOOK OUT FOR GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS

WHERE LAVA MYSTERY

Here, in the middle of beautiful light-brown sandstone outcrops, laying on top of the soft sand, are large dark stones, almost like a scene from another planet. Thousands of them covering the sand.

These rocks are made from basalt, which is a type of igneous rock. Basalt is formed when lava cools very quickly after being erupted from a volcano.

There are two types of volcanic rocks here, the darker basalt, and a grey rock, pumice, which is formed by volcanic ash.





Pick up a few rocks.
Can you find the pumice? It is a lighter grey colour and full of air holes.

There are no lava fields in the nature reserve, so how did these rocks get here? You can see how the rocks are all very well rounded, not sharp and fresh. This shows they have been moved in water.

A few kilometers away you can see a large lava field, called Harrat Uwayrid. These volcanic rocks have been transported from Harrat Uwayrid as heavy rains caused flooding in the area.





The rock face provides coverage for the Arabian Leopard and its prey species.

The shallow crevices and caves are good places to wait during hunting.

In the distance you can see a large flat landscape. This is Harrat Uwayrid, an enormous volcanic field, made up of dark, hard basalt.

Around 8 million years ago, volcanoes erupted under the land here, and a huge amount of lava spilled out, covering hundreds of kilometers.

These volcanoes were not the explosive ones you might imagine, but more similar to the eruptions you see in Hawaii. They spewed out an incredible amount of lava, covering the ancient sandstones.

LOOK OUT FOR GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS


WHERE BOULDER BROTHERS

Like the surrounding sandstones you can see in the nature reserve, these rocks were formed by shallow seas around 480 million years ago.

The unusual columns look like a prehistoric gateway. But it wasn't carved by humans, it was carved by nature. Thousands of years of wind and rain, and even ice, have slowly broken down an enormous amount of rock, leaving just these two columns here.



In a setting like this, Arabian Leopards might leave signs for each other through scat (droppings).



Heavy rains can cause powerful flooding in deserts. These fast flowing temporary rivers erode the lower parts of rocks, causing them to be thinner at the base.

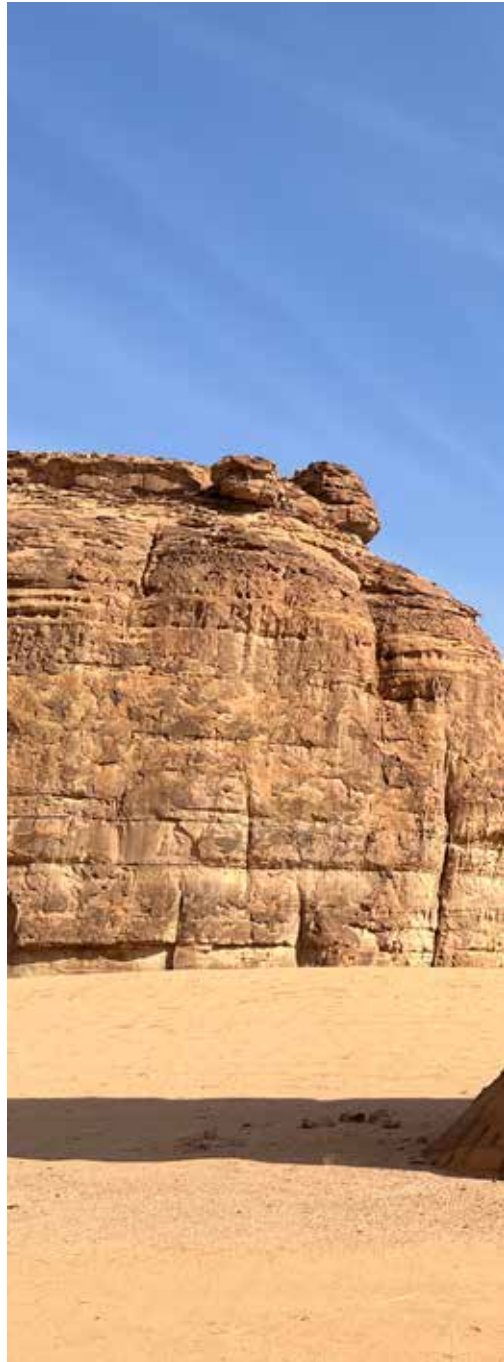
Although they look like they are balancing on top of the sand, these columns are actually connected to the rock below. Over time, as the bottom is eroded more, eventually these rocks will topple over.

LOOK OUT FOR GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS

WHERE THROUGHOUT THE TRAIL

A common feature that can be seen in the sandstones across AIUa are holes in the rock. They look almost like miniature cities from an alien civilization. These are natural structures that can be found in sandstones across the world, known as tafoni.

Tafoni is an unusual structure formed by weathering. Larger fragments in the rock, like small pebbles, will fall out, and the small grains around it are looser. Wind will loosen these grains more, so where there was once a pebble in the rock, there is now a hole.





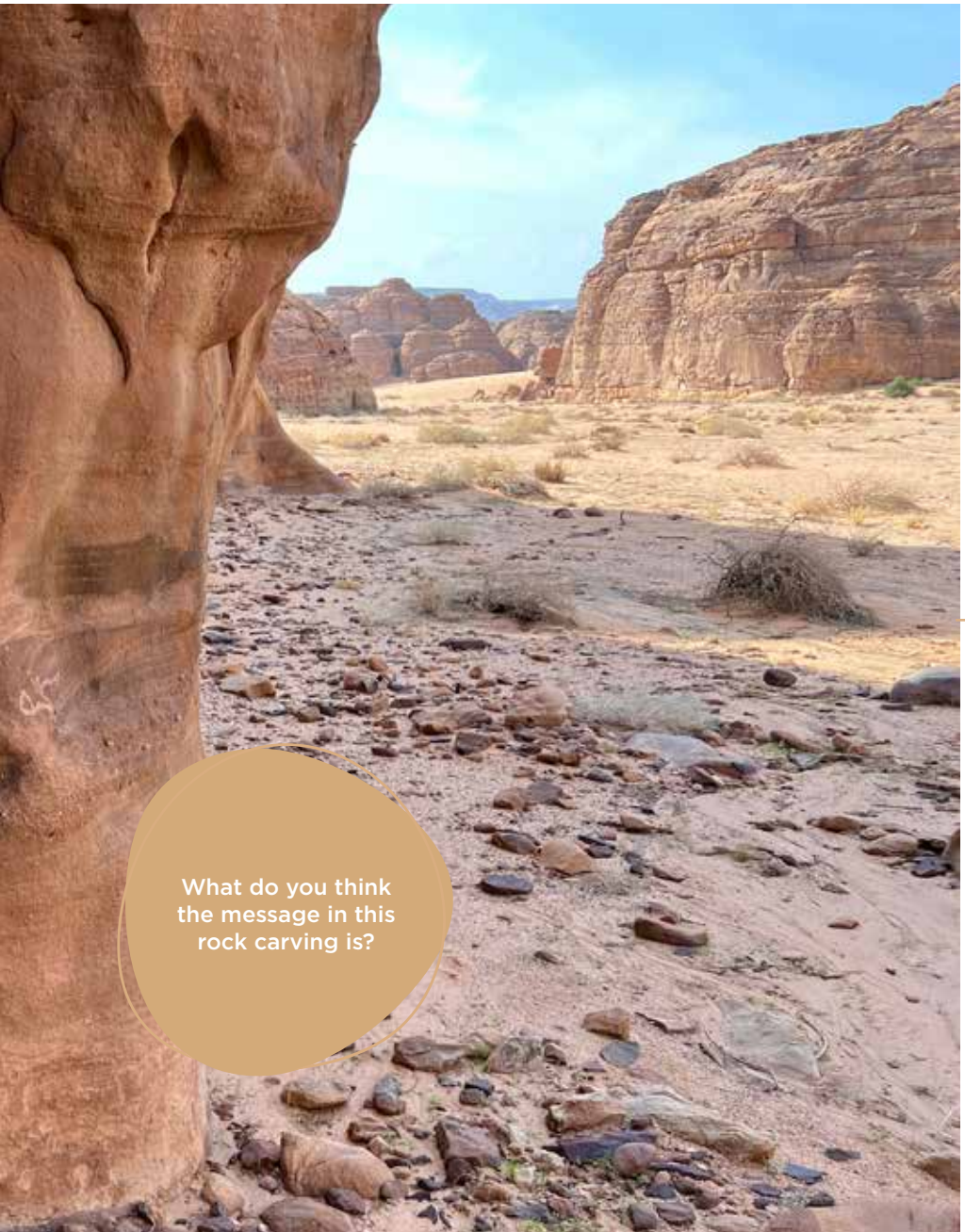
It can take hundreds of years for the wind to pull out each grain, gently carving out some very beautiful features in the sandstone.

LOOK OUT FOR WARRIOR & HORSE ROCK CARVING

WHERE BEFORE SAND DUNES

Around 4,000 years ago local tribes in the region carved what they saw into the rock. Sometimes the carvings are of animals, and sometimes they record an activity, like hunting.

There are thousands of ancient rock carvings all over AlUla. They are a unique record of not only humans, but of the animals that once lived here. There are carvings of horses, camels, ostriches, leopards, and even elephants that once lived in this beautiful landscape.



What do you think
the message in this
rock carving is?

**LOOK OUT FOR
WILDLIFE:
INSECTS**

**WHERE
THROUGHOUT
THE TRAIL**

You will see a lot of small creatures in Sharaan. Keep your eyes open for ants, butterflies, spiders and beetles.



**CARPENTER
ANT**



**PITTED
BEETLE**

There are little signs that animals are not too far away, like these ant mounds.



**PAINTED LADY
BUTTERFLY**



**CAPER WHITE
BUTTERFLY**

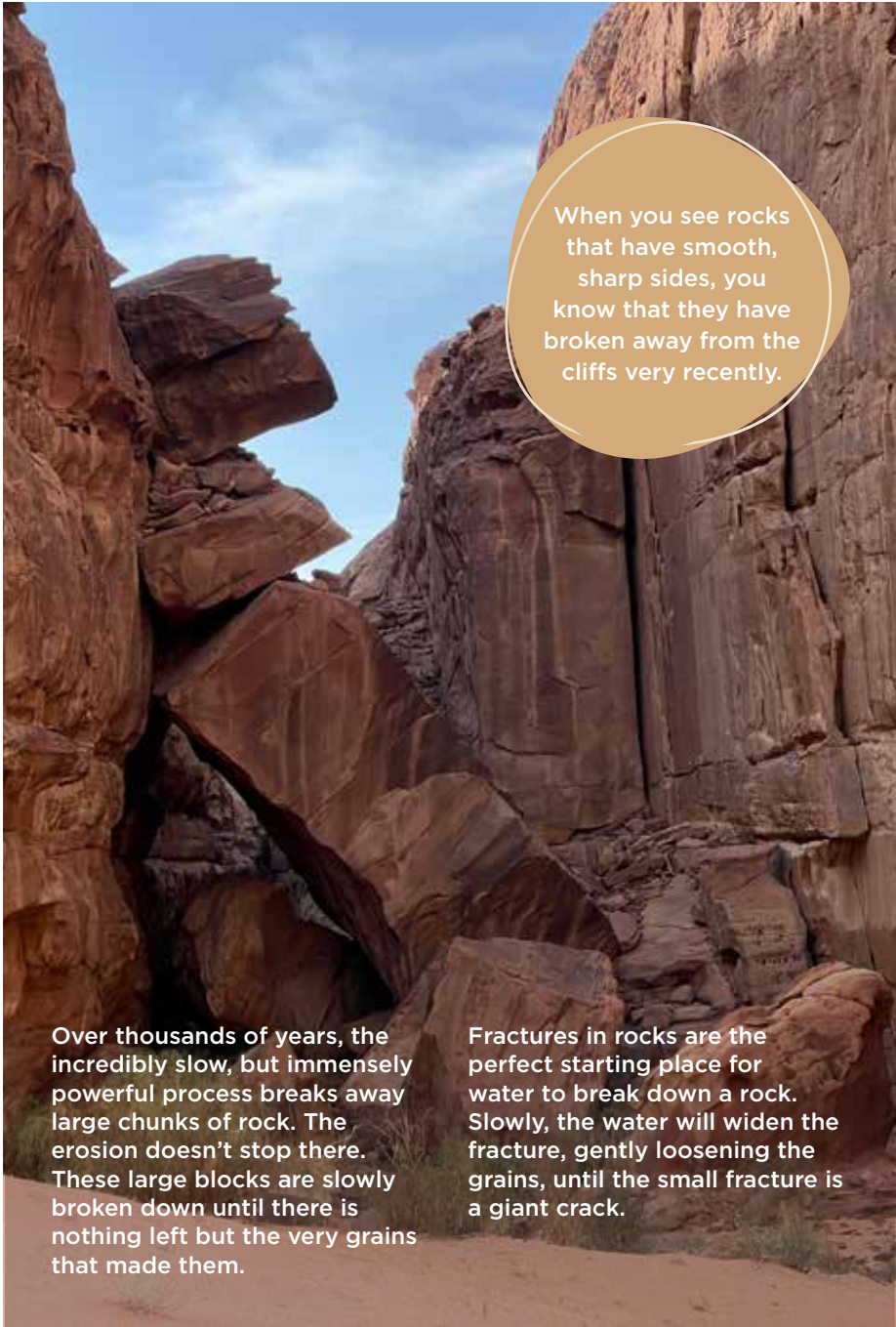
LOOK OUT FOR
**GEOLOGICAL
FORMATIONS**

WHERE
**TRAIL END,
FEATURING
SAND DUNES**



These jumbled rocks (far right) are very attractive to Hyraxes, which Arabian Leopards love to hunt.

The longest stretch of beautiful, soft sand dunes surrounded by striking rock formations can be seen along the final 500m of the Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail. Keep your eyes open for animal tracks, and familiar plants.



When you see rocks that have smooth, sharp sides, you know that they have broken away from the cliffs very recently.

Over thousands of years, the incredibly slow, but immensely powerful process breaks away large chunks of rock. The erosion doesn't stop there. These large blocks are slowly broken down until there is nothing left but the very grains that made them.

Fractures in rocks are the perfect starting place for water to break down a rock. Slowly, the water will widen the fracture, gently loosening the grains, until the small fracture is a giant crack.

LOOK OUT FOR PLANTS

WHERE THROUGHOUT THE TRAIL

It might be surprising, but the desert is full of a range of beautiful plant life, and you can see a wonderful variety on the Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail. You may not see all types of plants, as some flowering species will depend on the rains, but other hardier plants can be found even on the hottest of days.



SCIENTIFIC NAME
*Tribulus
terrestris*

**PUNCTURE
VINE**



SCIENTIFIC NAME
*Zygophyllum
bruguieri*



SCIENTIFIC NAME
*Senna
italica*

PORT ROYAL SENNA



POISONOUS!
Please don't touch.



EYELASH PLANT

SCIENTIFIC NAME
*Blepharis
ciliaris*

SCIENTIFIC NAME
*Rhayza
stricta*

DOGBANE



**LOOK OUT FOR
ACACIA TREE
& DISTINCTIVE ROCK**

**WHERE
END OF THE TRAIL!**



Arabian Leopards love to leave scratch marks on big trees, with the Acacia being a favourite.

**You have completed the 7km
Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail, AIUla.**

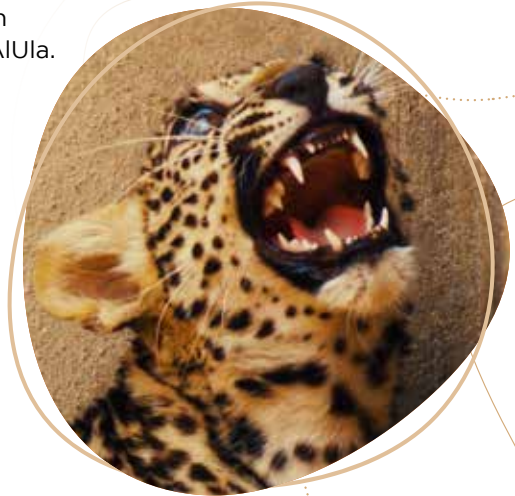


ARABIAN LEOPARD

Catwalk Trails is the latest initiative from Catmosphere, in alignment with Catmosphere's objectives to raise awareness for Big Cat conservation and underscore that all of our wellbeing is interconnected.

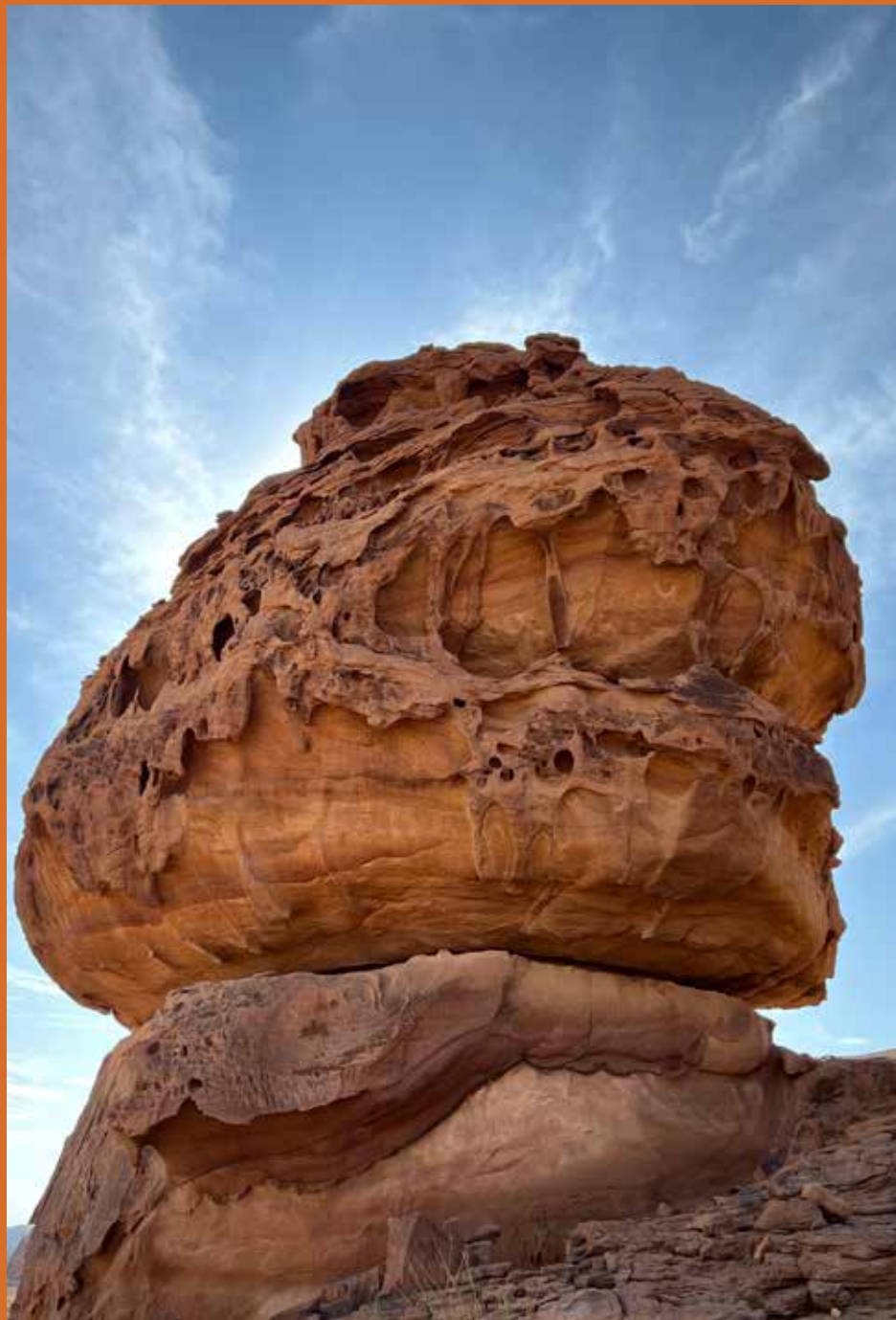
Catwalk Trails offers benefits and exposure on both a local and international level, linking the wellbeing of Big Cats to that of the local community and encouraging responsible tourism.

On 10th February 2023, in partnership with the Royal Commission for AlUla, Catmosphere Foundation's Founder, Her Royal Highness Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud, inaugurated the first Catwalk Trail, the Arabian Leopard Celebration Trail in AlUla.



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الاولا
ALULA

CAT
MOS
PHE
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