

## **Chronology of Evolution of the Camel**

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50-40 million years ago (Eocene): The oldest known camel is *Protylopus*, appeared 40-50 million years ago (Eocene) in North America. It was the size of a rabbit and lived in the forest. Later, camels spread to the savanna and increased their size. In Oligocene, 35 million years ago, *Poebrotherium* was the size of a roe deer but already resembled a camel.

45-38 million years ago: The ancestors of the modern camel lived in North America. The ancestors of the llamas and camels appear to have diverged sometime in the Eocene epoch.

24-12 million years ago: Various types of camels evolved. *Stenomylus* was a gazelle like camel. *Alticamelus*, which lived 10 to 2 million years ago, had a long neck similar to a giraffe. *Procamelus*, just 1.2 m tall (like a modern Llama) evolved in the *Camelus* genus (to which modern camels belong). Llamas migrated to South America, and all the camels in North America died out. Once in Asia, camels migrated through Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

3-2 million years ago: *Camelus* passed from North America in Asia through Beringia 2-3 million years ago.

2 million years ago: The ancestors of llama and vicuña passed into the Andes coming from North America. The last camel surviving the cradle of the camel evolution, North America, was *Camelops hesternus*, which disappeared 12-10,000 years ago together with the whole mega fauna of North America (mammoths, mastodons, giant sloth and saber toothed cats). Still, a fossil species of camel, *Camelus alutensis*, related to modern species, inhabited Europe.

1.8 million to 11,500 years ago: They weren't completely separated from each other until the Pleistocene epoch, when the ancestors of the camels migrated across the Bering Strait (temporary) land bridge to Asia.

4,000 years ago: The Bactrian camels were spread with the Indo-Iranian invasion from Mesopotamia to the Indus valley and Afghanistan and 3,700-3,200 years ago reached western Siberia and Ukraine. 2,300 years ago they were present in China.

3,500 years ago: Dromedary could have been domesticated in southwestern Arabia between 6,000 to 3,400 years ago, initially for their milk, while the larger and slower Bactrian camel (with two humps) was in Northeastern Iran and southwestern Central Asia about 3,500 years ago. From Arabia, dromedaries entered Somalia 3,500 years ago, and by 500 BC they reached the Atlantic coast.

1200 BC: The first camel saddles appeared, and Bactrian camels could be ridden. The first Arabian saddle was put way to the back of the camel, and control of the Bactrian camel happened by means of a stick.

853 BC: There is a reference in historical records to the Arab king Gindibu employing as many as 1000 camels at the Battle of Qarqar, although it is not clear how they were employed during the battle.

The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III fought an army made of Syrians and Jews joined by the Arabian king Gindibu, with his army of 1,000 ...camel riders. The Assyrian chivalry was spooked by the sight of the unusual beasts and ran away. On the ruins of the city of Nineveh (the ancient Assyrian capital), the chivalry of King Assurbanipal (669-627 BC) can be seen fighting Arab camel riders.

559-530 BC: The conquests of the Persian king Cyrus the Great (559-530) were based on the logistical support of dromedaries.

547 BC: He fought against king Croesus of Lydia (modern western Turkey) and employed these animals in what was to become one of the most famous stratagems of Antiquity: "He gathered all the dromedaries from his army train, took off their burdens and set cavalry men upon them. Having thus furnished them, he ordered them to go in front of the rest

The first recorded use of the camel as a military animal occurred during the Battle of Thymbra, fought between Cyrus the Great of Persia and Croesus of Lydia. According to Xenophon, Cyrus' cavalry were outnumbered by as much as six to one. Acting on information from one of his generals that the Lydian horses shied away from camels, Cyrus formed the camels from his baggage train into the first Camel Corps in history. Although not technically employed as cavalry, they were crucial in panicking the Lydian cavalry and turning the battle in Cyrus' favor.

530-522 BC: The Persian king Cambyses (530-522 BC) introduced for the first time dromedaries in Egypt. The army moved towards the horsemen of Croesus; he did this because horses are afraid of dromedaries and can't endure to see or smell them."

500-100 BC: However it wasn't until this period that Bactrian camels finally attained a military use. These new saddles were put over the humps of the animal, and they were also inflexible and bent, dividing the weight sufficiently over the animal.

486-465 BC: The Persian king Xerxes (485-465 BC) was proud of his camels and their Arabian riders. Domesticated camels were used through much of North Africa, and the Romans had a corps of camel warriors to patrol the edge of the desert. Camels were also used by Romans for transportation, especially in the eastern provinces of Egypt, Arabia, Judaea, Syria, Cappadocia, and Mesopotamia. The Persian camels, however, were not particularly suited to trading or travel over the Sahara; rare journeys through the desert were still made on horse-drawn-chariots.

43 BC: Julius Caesar considered the greatest war catch after the defeat of the Numidia King Juba's camels. (Numidia is today northern Algeria.)

9<sup>th</sup> century BC: Dromedaries were involved in warfare, to carry archers and transport heavy loads.

7<sup>th</sup> Century BC: The military Arabian saddle appeared, which slightly improved the saddle design again.

363 AD: General Romanus asked as a war tribute to the dwellers of the city Lepcis Magna (today Libya) 4,000 camels, for the transport of his army.

Much later, the Muslims claimed that Allah first created the camel after that the mountains, the deserts, the plains, the rivers, the seas and the other living things. Muhammad himself is said to have escaped from Mecca to Medina on the back of a camel. The Muslim's superstition says that the left fore limb of the dromedary belongs to Satan.

1020-1135: The Islamic conquest of North Africa brought Arabian camels fit for long desert journeys carrying a great deal of cargo. This boosted trade over the Sahara. Arabs also introduced the dromedary to Europe; 1020 in Spain, 1059 in Sicily, and by 1136 they reached the Rhine but later disappeared from Europe.

1836: Major George H. Crosman encouraged the United States Department of War to use camels for transportation in campaigns against Native Americans in Florida during the Seminole Wars because of their ability to survive on little food and water. His arguments won the attention of Senator Jefferson Davis. It was not until after the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–1848), when the US forces were required to campaign in arid and desert regions, that officials began to take the idea seriously.

Newly appointed as Secretary of War by President Franklin Pierce, Jefferson Davis found the Army needed to improve transportation in the southwestern US, which he and most observers thought a great desert. The adventurer, Josiah Harlan was lobbying for the Army to use camels. The rough terrain and dry climate were considered too harsh for the horses and mules regularly used by the Army. Among those supporting the alternative mounts was Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale. When his unit had taken the arid southern route, it ran out of water, endangering both men and beasts, and was attacked by Apaches. Beale thought camels superior for transport in such an inhospitable landscape. He was influenced by reading Évariste Régis Huc's *Recollections of a Journey through Tartary, Tibet, and China* in 1852, which extolled the camel's virtues.

1855: The US Congress appropriated \$30,000 for the project. Major Henry C. Wayne, was assigned to procure the camels. Wayne departed New York City on board the USS Supply, under the command of then-Lieutenant David Dixon Porter, a cousin of Beale.

1856: The ship crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and arrived in Smyrna where it loaded 21 (some reports say 31) camels. Two weeks later it departed with the camels and five handlers for the Gulf of Mexico. The Supply arrived at Indianola, Texas. Large swells made the transferring the

camels to a shallower draft ship for landing impossible; both ships had to go to the mouth of the Mississippi River to find calmer waters for the transfer.

The Army loaded the camels and they were driven to Camp Verde via Victoria and San Antonio. Reports from initial tests were largely positive. The camels proved to be exceedingly strong, and were able to move quickly across terrain which horses found difficult. The first shipment of the camels arrived at Indianola and were unloaded.

1857: Their legendary ability to go without water proved valuable on an 1857 survey mission led by Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale. He rode a camel from Fort Defiance to the Colorado River and his team used 25 camels on the trip. The survey team took the camels into California, where they were stationed at the Benicia Arsenal. A second shipment of forty-one camels arrived at Indianola.

1859: During a survey of the Trans-Pecos region to find a shorter route to Fort Davis, the Army used the camels again. Under the command of Lt. Edward Hartz and Lt. William Echols, the team surveyed much of the Big Bend area.

1860: Echols headed another survey team through the Trans-Pecos that employed the Camel Corps. With the outbreak of the American Civil War, the Camel Corps was mostly forgotten. Handlers had had difficulty with their spooking the horses and mules. Beale offered to keep the Army's camels on his property, but Union Secretary of War Edwin Stanton rejected the offer. Many of the camels were sold to private owners; others escaped into the desert throughout the West and British Columbia. Beale's favorite, the white camel "Seid" fought with another camel during rutting season and was killed by a crushing blow to head. Seid's bones were sent to the Smithsonian Institution.

1862-63: Frank Laumeister, a veteran of the corps, bought several camels from the Army. He took his herd to the new Colony of British Columbia, where he used the animals to carry freight on the Douglas Road, Old Cariboo Road and other gold rush-era routes there. Between the region's rocky trails and roads, which cut up the camels' feet, and the hostility between camels and mules, the experiment was a failure.

1900-1904: Ganga Singh subsequently lead the Ganga Risala when it fought in the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, in Somaliland in 1902-1904 to quell the Somali Uprising and in Egypt in World War I.

1902: Hi Jolly (Hadji Ali), an Ottoman citizen, came to the US as the lead camel driver. He lived out his life in the US. After his death in 1902, he was buried in Quartzsite, Arizona. His grave is marked by a pyramid-shaped monument topped with a small metal camel. France created a camel corps as part of the Armée d'Afrique in the Sahara from 1902, replacing regular units of Algerian spahis and tirailleurs earlier used to patrol the desert boundaries.

1915: At the Suez Canal in 1915 the corps routed the opposing Turkish forces in a camel cavalry charge. The Corps fought in the Middle East in World War II, when it was supported by the camel-mounted Bijay Battery, which became a mule team battery.

1916: During World War I, the British created the Imperial Camel Corps, which was a brigade-sized military formation that fought in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign. It comprised infantry mounted on camels for movement across desert.

1919: The Corps was reduced in strength to a single battalion and was formally disbanded. Also during World War I, the British Army created the Egyptian Camel Transport Corps, which consisted of a group of Egyptian camel drivers. The Corps supported British war operations in the Sinai desert and in Palestine and Syria by transporting supplies to the troops.

1930: Laumeister put his camels out to pasture, from which some escaped. The last sighting of a feral camel in British Columbia was in the 1930s. Their presence in local history is reflected in the name of the Camels foot Range near Lillooet, and in a local basin called "the Camoo."

1930-1975: The Tropas Nómadas (Nomad Troops) were an auxiliary regiment of Sahrawi tribesmen serving in the colonial army in Spanish Sahara (today Western Sahara). Operational from the 1930s until the end of the Spanish presence in the territory in 1975, the Tropas Nómadas were equipped with small arms and led by Spanish officers. The unit guarded outposts and sometimes conducted patrols on camelback.

1951-1965: After India's independence the Bikaner Camel Corps was merged with camel troops from Jaisalmer in 1951 to become the Ganga Jaisalmer Risala and joined the Grenadiers as the 13th battalion. It took part in the actions to foil Pakistani raiders in the Bikaner and Jaisalmer regions during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965.

1960: The Somaliland Camel Corps was a unit of the British Army based in British Somaliland from the early 20th century until the 1960s. The Bikaner Camel Corps was a military unit from India that fought for the allies in World War I and World War II.

1962: The camel mounted units were retained in service until the end of French rule in 1962. The French transferred the French personnel to other units and disbanded the locally recruited meharistes.

1974: The Ganga Jaisalmer Risala was dismounted in 1974 and underwent conversion into standard infantry. It continues to serve as a regular infantry battalion under the name 13 Grenadiers (Ganga Jaisalmer).

1975: All of the Indian Military Camel Corps, including the Ganga Jaisalmer Risala, were disbanded. A brief attempt was made to resurrect them but the plan never came to fruition. The Ganga Risala still survives though as a part of the Border Security Force, retaining the name Bikaner Camel Corps.

2005: Scientists discovered in Syria a fossil Dromedary species twice the size of the modern species.

