

Press Release
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14th International Nomads Festival

*“Travelling has taught me that the man who is free, is a nomad. So I am choosing freedom, before it’s too late.”
Jacques Brel, in an interview given to RTB in 1971*

The **Association Nomades du Monde** will stage the 14th edition of the International Nomads Festival from 16 to 18 March 2017, in the last oasis before the Moroccan Sahara, M’hamid El Ghizlane. This celebration of nomadic culture from across the entire globe emanates from a community of 8,000 inhabitants, situated at the heart of a biosphere reserve of the southern Moroccan oases in the province of Zagora, just four hours from Ouarzazate.

This free community event gives both local and international audiences the opportunity to experience the arts and traditions of past generations. These three days of music, debate, games of hockey, camel races, gastronomy and crafts, serve to regenerate the entire region.

According to founder and director, **Noureddine Bougrab**, the festival is a unifying force, creating a “local dynamic, a genuine vector for development”, which above all involves local youth. A teacher of Classical Arabic in the M’hamid school, he is adamant about the participation of local young people in an event which attracted 15,000 visitors and 250 participants in 2016. “We are expecting to double that number this year”, he adds, clearly thinking of this year’s rich and varied programme.

Festival partners

The festival is the result of a close collaboration between the **Association Nomades du Monde** and regional and national partners: Zagora Province, the Moroccan Ministry of Culture, the Region of Drâa-Tafilalet, ANDZOA, ONMT, Fondation Banque Populaire, Maison de l’Artisan, Poste Maroc, TUifly, Afrikayna, 2M, ORMVAO...

Musical programme

As in every year since 2004, M’hamid will swing to some fifteen performances taking place over three nights on the open air stage in the centre of town. This year’s international guests include the celebrated Touareg guitarist from Niger, Bombino; the Malian Touareg rockers, Terakaft; and a trio of Polish groups: joyful Balkan gypsy-style performers, Dikanda; traditional folk band, Dudy Skrzypce; and flamenco singer and dancer Magda Navarette. Morocco will be represented by the legendary Nass El Ghiwane; rising gnawa star Medhi Nassouli; Saharan diva Saida Charaf; rocker Mohamed Jbara; and the traditional dance ensemble Ahwach Ouarzazate. Last but not least, there will be local performers from M’hamid, led by the group Ajial M’hamid and Groupe Charq.

The Nomads Forum

The oral tradition will be celebrated with debates and workshops in the Forum des Nomades. As always, the focus will be on the heritage and history of the Drâa-Tafilalet region. This ancient cultural crossroad was an important stopover on the trans-Saharan trade route. Nowadays, M’hamid El Ghizlane is home to a palmery which spreads for sixteen kilometres along the river Drâa. But how do we begin to envisage a future for nomadism in a Sahara which has seen its population of nomads drop by 70% in the last decade? National and international authorities will share their vision with us in the Forum des Nomades.

Crafts and traditions

Those who can linger after the festival can discover the Monday souk, a dream opportunity to buy local produce, suffused with the colours and fragrances of the region: the perfect complement to a visit to the **exhibition of local produce and Moroccan crafts** which will take place throughout the three days of the festival.

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