



## The History of Camel Introduction in Europe

### Description

## A series of camel stories from different regions of the world

The **camel**, most closely associated with desert climates, actually has unique connections to **Europe**. The Romans made the first introductions of Arabian (one hump) **camels**, likely for menageries, but archaeological evidence also supports their use as working animals in Belgium during the Roman period.



Some very **old references** are available about the camels in early medieval Europe. The Visigoths and other tribes may have brought them into Western Europe. In France, the Merovingian King Clotaire paraded his Queen Brunehaut on a camel before having her executed. The Arabs and Berbers in the early eighth century brought camels with them, but camel herding never really flourished in those regions. The Hohenstaufen king Redrick made use of camels in Sicily and southern Italy.

There were several attempts to introduce camels into Europe in the early modern period. Around 1623 a small herd of camels owned by King James used to graze daily in St James's Park. Philip of Spain maintained a small zoo in the gardens of his palace at Aranjuez with 4 camels, which he had brought over in the 1570s from Africa. They proved useful in building work, so more were bred until there were about 40. Ferdinand de Medici, Grand

Duke of Tuscany, introduced imported camels in 1622 to be used as pack animals. The last of the herd lingered in the environs of Pisa until the second World War when soldiers killed the remnant for meat.



In 19th century Spain there were **feral camels** in the swamps of the Guadalquivir Delta. Allegedly they had been left there by the British army in the Peninsular War. Alternatively and less romantically, they had originally been imported into the province of Cadiz in 1829 to work on road-building and other projects. There were other short-lived attempts to introduce camels in Spain, Poland, and elsewhere.

## Source

Camel (book) by Robert Irwin

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