

A taste of the sand life at Camp RZR in Glamis

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Photos by Garth Milan

Northwest of Yuma, just over the California border, sit the North Algodones Dunes. At the southernmost edge of those dunes is Glamis, a tiny town that exists because so many off-road enthusiasts visit those sand dunes. And every year, thousands of them congregate for the annual Camp RZR event put on by Polaris.

Imagine, if you will, a flat area of sand just off the highway that normally hosts little more than a handful of trucks and trailers as an ad hoc parking lot. People who enjoy running their side-by-sides, all-terrain vehicles, and dirt bikes in the sand come to Glamis and Algodones daily, year-round. On weekends, a few RVs and even some tents will also be seen there as enthusiasts make the most of their outdoor off-road fun.

But in late October, that all changes. That usually sparse parking lot becomes a small town made up of RVs, trailers, UTVs, and crowds of people looking for a weekend of fun. There is a giant ferris wheel with the Polaris emblem at its center, a huge concert stage where acts like Blink 182 and local artists put on concerts every night, vendor

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booths, repair “pits” for broken utes, and food trucks all gathered in a surprisingly well-coordinated menagerie. And the vehicles. Every off-road rig you can imagine, if it’s ready for the sand, is likely seen on and off the dunes.

This is Camp RZR and it’s the premier sand-themed off-road event of the year for enthusiasts and fun seekers alike.

The 2022 Camp RZR event was one of the largest in recent years. We attended to see huge crowds, a lot of camaraderie, and enough fun to create memories for a lifetime. Kids, teenagers, adults, families, and professional Baja runners were all there and happily hitting the dunes and getting pizza from a converted fire truck.

The amount of spontaneous order to be

seen was amazing and spoke well of human nature. Breakdowns happen and rigs get stuck. Others around those having trouble would quickly swoop in to help, pulling stuck vehicles out of their mire and towing broken UTVs back to camp. There, Polaris supplied a crack pit crew of technicians to make free repairs to those having trouble. Often by pil-laging parts from vehicles Polaris brought as loaners or display models.

At night, concerts happen on the big stage as crowds bob their heads and enjoy the music. Then a nightly ride up to the tallest of the nearby dunes, Oldsmobile Hill, ensues. Light up marker poles on various rigs and headlights shining down make a line across the dune’s peak. Fireworks greet those nightly gatherings, launching just outside of Camp RZR

proper for a show that everyone can enjoy.

From watching clinics showing children proper safety and use of gear to curated ride and drives for newcomers and pre-teens in a closed circuit to demonstration drives on Polaris-supplied machines on an easy dune route, we saw a lot for those just getting started in the dunes. For the rest? A free-for-all in the desert with sand slinging, rooster throwing, and dune sliding. Pretty much everywhere.

Camp RZR is sponsored by Polaris every year near Glamis and hosts hundreds of enthusiasts. Dates and reservations for the 2023 event are not yet available as of publication, but it’s worth watching for them because this is something nobody should skip doing at least once. ■

