HE unusual opportunity of travelling through the Alps on camel is now possible, thanks to local farmer Christine Sieber. The former office worker decided to follow her dreams of opening up a camel farm some years ago and is now offering camel caravan tours through the Ostallgaeu district of Bavaria in southern

and more animals. Her life

ago when Seiber received an

invite from the United Arab

Emirates to participate in a

headlines put Sieber's farm on

the map and her phone didn't

stop ringing, "Suddenly I was

getting requests from people

our camels," she explains.

interest from locals and

offer. "At one point I was

bringing guests on tours virtually every day," she says.

who wanted to come and ride

Initially, Sieber offered the

occasional guided tour but the

tourists alike meant she had to

Sieber lives with her husband

llamas, horses, donkeys, yaks.

sheep, goats, apes, parakeets,

meaning the mother of two is

for looking after and training

responsible seven days a week

and two sons on a working

desert camel race. The resultant media

changed totally around to years

"This isn't exactly how I planned things but now I couldn't imagine doing anything else. It's a dream to be working with animals," explains the 39-year-old as she strokes a camel called Dabian on the bridge of its nose. Dabian was brought from the warmer climes of Dubai but together with the other 30 camels on Sieber's farm in the village of Seeg, seems completely at home in the snowy Alpine conditions. "Camels are such beautiful animals. They're intelligent, proud, social and loveable," says Sieber. "Unfortunately most people only

while on holiday." Sieber believes what makes camels so special is that each animal has its own unique personality. "Camels are basically huge cuddly creatures, but they are also single-minded, dominant and very strong. If they are treated incorrectly then their handling behaviour can change."

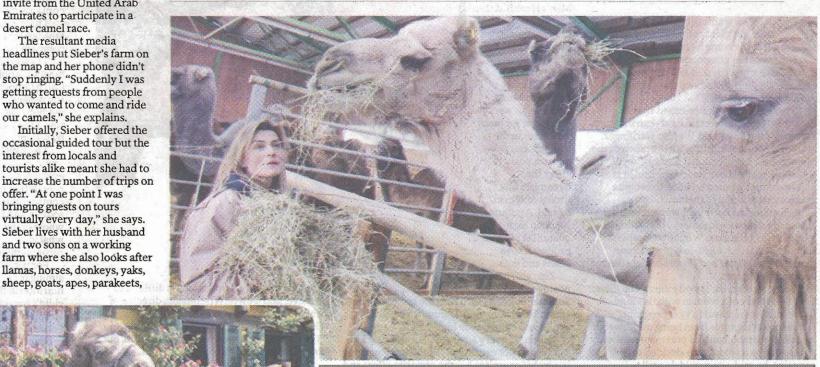
associate them with tourist attractions

Sieber's interest in camels began over 20 years ago and now she couldn't imagine her life without them. "Back then I had a single horse and as a rider was fascinated by these creatures," she says.

Sieber bought her first

Seeing the Alps on council middle of the 1990s and she

> Travellers can now enjoy an Alpine panorama on the back of a camel, thanks to a famer who is offering camel caravan tours in southern Germany



Sieber feeding her camels.

"We don't take the camels out when it's slippy or icy. They have very broad and soft feet, a bit like flat plates. They slip quite easily and could injure themselves," explains Sieber.

Firm deep snow, by contrast, is no problem for camels, which are also well able to cope with the cold German winter temperatures. After all, night temperatures in the desert can also drop well below zero.

"It's amazing how well

camels adapt to different situations. They are at home in temperatures between minus 40 and plus 40 degrees Celsius. They are comfortable in our milder temperatures," says Sieber.

Although the locals have gotten used to seeing camel caravans making their way through the area, the farm remains a unique experience.

"There are normally cows or horses on farms in the Allgaeu," says Seeg's Mayor Manfred Rinderle, who thinks

the farm is a real boon for the local community. "It helps differentiate us from other places and is a real attraction for families."

Sieber's passion for animals has seen her develop a name for herself far beyond the Allgaeu region. Journalists from all over the world, including Japanese and Argentine television reporters, have reported on her unusual camel farm, which is close to the famous Neuschwanstein castle. - dpa

the animals on the farm. reptiles, guinea pigs, rabbits, cats and a dog. Her husband continues with his career,

The farm is open to visitors between April and October, while camel-riding tours are offered all year round weather permitting.