



TRIP DOSSIER

MOROCCO



'Toubkal Ascent

£450 per person (Land Only)

Single supplement: £30 (Marrakech only)

Daily Departures

Tour Grade: C (D in winter)

Tour Outline

This tour has been designed for experienced walkers who are looking for a reasonably challenging trek in the Atlas Mountains, which can be squeezed into a week off work! Our itinerary includes an optional ascent of Mount Toubkal, the highest summit in North Africa as a finale to the trek. During the winter months (and late autumn/early spring) it is necessary to have knowledge of ice axe and crampons which are usually necessary at this time of year. There is also time for you to enjoy the sights, sounds and aromas of the majestic city of Marrakech before and after the trek.

After a free day in Marrakech you will transfer to the High Atlas Mountains, starting the trek from the 'ski resort' of Oukaïmeden, employing the full services of local staff (with a mule to carry your baggage) and a local qualified guide to assist you. Your trek will end in Aremd, from where you will return to Marrakech for your flight back to the UK

About the Country

History Morocco gained its independence in 1956 having been formerly divided between French and Spanish colonies. Spain retained claims over some areas however, most of which were returned to Morocco over the following decade. Morocco's first Head of State was Sultan Mohammed V, who changed his title to King, and who was succeeded in 1961, after his death, by his son, Hassan II. In July 1999 Hassan II died unexpectedly, causing much grief among the Moroccan people, and his son, Mohammed VI, has now succeeded him.

Geography Morocco is situated on the western tip of North Africa, the north coast being on the Mediterranean and the West Coast on the Atlantic. It lies very close to Europe, just a short ferry ride across the Strait of Gibraltar. The Atlas Mountain range forms the backbone of the country, from the fertile plains and sandy beaches on the Atlantic coast almost up to the Mediterranean in the north. To the west of the Atlas are fertile well-watered plains running down to the coast, whereas to the east a barren, rocky landscape merges into the true Sahara desert. With the coast, the mountains and the desert in such close proximity, the country enjoys a wide variety of topography.

Climate In general Morocco experiences hot, dry summers and mild winters. Up in the mountains however the weather can be very different from the plains. During the winter months there will be snow on the high peaks and on trek you can expect fresher and colder air than in Marrakech. On clear, sunny days it will be pleasantly warm with cold, crisp nights. **Be prepared for it to be cold in the evenings in the winter months!**

Average monthly temperatures in Marrakech.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	18	20	22	25	28	33	38	37	33	27	23	19
Min °C	5	8	9	11	14	17	21	20	19	15	10	8
Rainfall (mm)	29	30	31	33	20	8	2	2	10	17	27	33

Expect cooler temperatures in the mountains. Usually 1°C per 100 metres.

Language The official language of Morocco is Moroccan Arabic. There are also three separate Berber languages, one of which - Tashalhait - is the traditional language of High Atlas and Sous Valley Berbers. French is widely spoken, but little English.

The area you will visit Along with Fes and Meknes, Marrakech is one of the most fascinating cities in Morocco. The walled old city (the Medina) is crammed full of narrow streets, markets (souks), palaces and museums where only with a guide can one find the areas one is looking for. Outside the walls the 'new city' (Gueliz) offers the local residents and the tourists the full range of modern facilities - even a Pizza Hut! Our program allows enough time to visit the old (and most interesting) part of town without spending too long there. Just 50km to the south of Marrakech the High Atlas Mountains rise up out of the plains to an altitude of 4165m at the summit of Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa. Seen as a clear, snowclad backdrop to the city in the winter months the mountains are usually obscured from view by the summer heat haze. Rocky ridges separated by steep 'V' shaped valleys spider outwards from the central point of Mt. Toubkal. The endemic Berbers of this region have terraced and irrigated the otherwise bare hillsides, and built their tight packed villages entirely out of local materials to create some very aesthetic scenery. Winding and zigzagging muletracks link the villages over high passes, and these form most of the trails on which we will walk.

A Typical Day on Trek

Routine On this tour it is best to start reasonably early in order to maximise the time available during the day and to cover a fair amount of ground allowing for inclement weather. Some days, especially when taking in the summits, are longer than others, but whatever you do there is seldom any need to rush - the local Berbers never rush!

Trekking conditions. Mornings are usually clear, and this fine weather can last throughout the day. Shorts and t-shirts can be worn when the sun shines and fleeces are needed for the clear but cold evenings. The area above the Toubkal Refuge is generally classed as being 'snow conditions' during the winter in particular the summit of Toubkal itself. Great care should be taken as to where to walk and heed the advice of your tour leader and/or local experienced guide.

Trek staff. You will be accompanied by a local guide who will speak Berber, good French and some English and on the Easter Special the tour will be lead a fully qualified European Mountain Leader. Their local knowledge, mountain experience and support will ensure that the tour provides a safe and enjoyable walking environment. On the trek you will have mules to carry all your baggage, and a cook to do all your cooking.

What you need to provide Your personal equipment as detailed in the clothing and equipment list. A sleeping-bag IS required for this trip.

Ecological considerations *We believe that we are one of the most ecologically aware tour operators in Morocco. We ask for your full consideration and co-operation concerning all ecological matters, especially in the disposal of rubbish. We ask that you ensure that all your rubbish is either burned buried (or fed to the mules or goats!) if biodegradable or carried with you to a suitable disposal point. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please let our local staff know and inform us at Walks Worldwide on your return. It is with the tourists, the locals and the tour operators' co-operation that we can ensure that our tours are as eco-friendly as possible.*

Cultural considerations *As Morocco is a Moslem country we do ask all participants to take this into consideration, especially in the way they dress in the cities and villages. It is expected that women will cover legs and shoulders, although, as Morocco becomes more westernised, even the local people are becoming more relaxed about this. On trek shorts are accepted for walking, but both men and women should wear trousers or a long skirt when staying in the villages. Please do not simply look at other tourists and feel that what they wear is correct – you will never know what the local people think of them. To gain respect from the Moroccan people you should show that you are trying to respect their culture. If in doubt at any time, please consult your tour leader.*

Itinerary

Your accommodation and inclusive meals (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner) are indicated in ***bold italic*** at the end of each day.

Day 1. Fly to Marrakech and transfer to your hotel. ***Hotel Foucauld, Marrakech, D (depending on flight time).***

Day 2. In the morning you may like to arrange with reception for a three hour tour of the old city, taking in some of the palaces, the old Koranic school and the markets, and travelling part of the way by 'caleche' (horse and carriage) – payable locally. The afternoon is free in Marrakech. A 'siesta' is often taken in the early afternoon and later the hotel staff can direct you to a swimming pool, or another ride on a 'caleche' is often a popular option. ***Hotel Foucauld, Marrakech. B, D.***

Day 3. After breakfast you will transfer to the 'ski resort' of Oukaïmeden, a 2-hour drive along a good tarmac road. Oukaïmeden is situated at about 2700 metres, and here you will find flat, green valleys which to stroll. In the afternoon you will start your acclimatisation with an ascent up to the pass of Tizi n'ou Attar at 3100 metres, from where there are superb views down the upper Ourika valley. You will return to the Chalet refuge for the night. However, if there has been a lot of snow during the winter the scene could be very different and in the winter months you may even have the opportunity to try a bit of downhill skiing in Morocco's 'premiere' ski resort! [3 – 4 hours walking] ***Club Alpin Francais refuge, Oukaïmeden. B, L, D.***

Day 4. Using mules to carry the baggage you will ascend gently to the pass of Tizi n'ou Addi (2960 metres) after which the trail descends to the village of Tacchedirt in the upper Imenane valley. Again, depending on snow conditions, there is an opportunity to ascend Oukaïmeden peak (3262 metres) on the way to the pass. After a

lunch break here you will continue to the village of Ouensekra. [4 – 5 hours walking] *Simple gite, Ouensekra. B, L, D.*

Day 5. From Ouensekra an old mine road leads up to the pass of Tizi n Tamatert, from where there are spectacular views into the Mizane valley and the road-head at Imlil. You descend to Imlil on a good mule track, and after lunch climb up for about an hour to the village of Aremd. As the hub of all trekking in this area, Aremd has seen immense improvements over the last fifteen years due to revenue from tourism and project work. It remains however a delightful village in a beautiful location [4 – 5 hours walking] *Simple hotel, Aremd. B, L, D.*

Day 6. A well-made mule track leads from Aremd all the way up to the newly extended refuge at the foot of the final slopes of Mount Toubkal. Today you will follow this as it leads up the Mizane River, passing the holy shrine of Sidi Chamharouch after about one-and-a-half hours. As this is a Muslim place of worship, you must respect the local custom and not attempt to enter the shrine. There are however a number of small shops here to service both the local Muslim pilgrims as well as the tourists on their way to and from Mount Toubkal. Some tourist guide books refer to this place as the 'robbers den', not because you can expect to be robbed, but you can guarantee that the local Berbers will try to sell you all sorts of 'junk' souvenirs as well as soft drinks at inflated prices! The gradient is gentle and the refuge (at 3000 metres) is usually reached after a long morning's walk, allowing time for relaxation in the afternoon. [4 – 5 hours walking] *Toubkal Refuge. B, L, D.*

Day 7. The ascent of Toubkal (4167 metres) is a 3 to 4 hour climb up a well-trodden track, which can be a little loose at times. It is more than likely that snow will cover some sections (or maybe even all) of the route during the winter months and **ice axe and crampon experience will be essential. At times it may not be possible to make the ascent in which case an alternative route will be used.** You will take a simple pack lunch up with you so that there is no rush and you can linger a while on the top of this, north Africa's highest, mountain. If the air is clear you will have fine views towards the Sahara. You can descend to the valley via a different route after which it is a nice gentle 2 to 3 hour descent down the wide muletrail back to Aremd. *Basic hotel, Aremd. [7 – 8 hours walking] B, L, D.*

Day 8. After breakfast you walk back down to Imlil to rendezvous with your transport to Marrakech. After lunch in Marrakech there will be time to enjoy the early evening activities that take place in the Djemma El Fna, just a stone's throw away from your hotel. Acrobats, storytellers, fire-eaters and snake charmers entertain locals and tourists alike (but get a lot more money off the photo-taking tourists!). [45 minutes walking] *Hotel Foucauld, Marrakech. B, D.*

Day 9. Return to UK. *B.*

Practical Information

Passports and Visas All nationalities require a valid passport with an expiry date at least 6 months after the date of your return to London. Most nationalities (including British) do not require a visa; if in doubt, please check with us.

Accommodation In Marrakech we use a relatively modest hotel because it offers better settings and perspectives on local life than the isolated first class hotels. All the rooms include private facilities. In Aremd you will sleep in a newly constructed simple hotel, which has hot showers, toilet and a restaurant. In Ouensekra you will sleep in a simple 'gite d'etape', **where facilities are very basic**, and in Oukaimeden and at the foot of Mount Toubkal in a modern Alpine refuge with full facilities, in small dormitories.

Food and Drink Moroccan food is excellent. First class fresh produce, with the subtle addition of herbs and spices, is used to produce innumerable tagines (stews), meschoui (roast lamb), couscous and pastilla (pigeon pie). The fresh fruit is delicious, and so are Moroccan cakes and pastries. You will be able to sample all these in Marrakech, and there will usually be plenty of European, mainly French, food available too.

On the trek you will be eating food purchased in Marrakech. Sardines are ubiquitous and form an important basis for lunches! There are plenty of streams, springs and wells where drinking water is available. Sterilising tablets (iodine based) or Lugol's iodine solution should be used, however, to purify all your water, unless it is being boiled to make a brew of tea, coffee or hot chocolate. Bottled mineral water is readily available in the cities and towns, but may not be available in the mountains all the time. Soft fizzy drinks however seem to appear (at a price) in the most unlikely of places

Although alcohol is now available in Marrakech the 'culture' and 'religion' of the mountain areas discourage its use and this is a policy that we generally adhere to. The 'Club Alpin Francais' in Oukaimeden serves a selection of Moroccan wine and beer.

Vegetarians will usually find that there is generally little difficulty on this tour where we predominately cook for ourselves. However they may have to make polite, subtle excuses if we are guests in a village house as it is rude to refuse food that is offered, but it is usually quite easy to 'pretend' to eat with the group.

Local transport All transfers will be made using private minibuses or taxis.

Baggage Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We limit you to approximately 15 kilos whilst on trek, and recommend you to pack your clothes in plastic bags to ensure they remain dry. We would prefer you to use your kitbags rather than large rucksacks on trek, and we will be supplying you with a complimentary *Walks Worldwide* kitbag prior to the tour, which is ideal for the purpose. Your entire trek luggage (including your sleeping bag) should, if at all possible, be packed into one kitbag. Extra baggage may be left in the hotel in Marrakech while you are trekking.

Vaccinations and medical precautions There are no statutory requirements in Morocco, unless you are arriving from an area infected with cholera or yellow fever. We recommend however, that you be protected against TB, typhoid, polio, tetanus and, particularly, hepatitis A. Malaria in Morocco is almost non-existent, but you may wish to take malarial tablets. Your doctor should advise you on this and about vaccinations, and you should therefore make an appointment to see him/her well in advance of your holiday if possible.

Currency The Moroccan unit of currency is the Dirham (DH). At the time of writing (Oct 05) £1 = 15.5 DH. No Moroccan currency may be imported or exported. There is no limit on the amount of foreign currency that may be imported provided it is declared on arrival. When changing your money, ensure that you keep your receipt, which will enable you to exchange up to half the amount of Dirhams you have received back into foreign currency when you leave the country. You will need to change all the money that you will need for the trek at the start in Marrakech, as there are no exchange facilities on the trek. Sterling traveller's cheques are readily accepted in banks and the larger hotels, and cash dispensers are available in Marrakech.

Electricity 240 volts A.C.

Time Moroccan time is GMT all year round.

Contact details It is not our policy to provide addresses and telephone numbers of every location that you will be staying at on this tour as, due to frequent changes in contact details, it is very difficult to provide an accurate list for all our tours. Your Final Joining Instructions, which you will receive two weeks prior to departure, will show any local contact details that are required for your tour. However we would be glad to provide you more details if you have a specific reason.

Mobile phones do work in Morocco. If you have not used your mobile outside the UK before you will have to contact your operator to enable international calls. Please note that it is expensive to phone both to and out of a mobile when abroad. We do not however encourage mobile phone use whilst walking on any of our trips – out of courtesy to other clients please use your mobile phone discretely. If you do need to get in touch, or if anyone needs to get in touch with you, please contact the Walks Worldwide office (01524 242000) during office hours.

Tipping There is no compulsory tipping on any of our treks. However tipping in restaurants is usual in Morocco, and at the end of most meals you should expect to throw in 5 or 6 Dirhams (about 10%) to provide a tip for the waiter. Our Berber staff and muleteers have come to 'expect' a tip at the end of the trek, which usually comprises of some old clothing as well as some cash. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousies in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service.

Things to buy Carpets, woollen and leather goods, pottery, jewellery, woodwork, copper and silverware. Bargaining is essential!

Maps Maps of the Toubkal region are usually available in the country itself and can be bought at the start of the trek in Aremd or Imlil. Should you wish to purchase them beforehand, we recommend either: The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321). *Jebel Toubkal-1:50,000 (Division de la carte, Rabat 1968)* used to be the

most useful map for trekking in Toubkal National Park. However a German publisher (Spruck/Zylka) has recently produced an excellent map of the Toubkal region at 1: 60 000 and 1: 100 000 and this is available from the shops mentioned above. *Walks Worldwide* has copies of all the necessary maps and will provide you with a photocopy that cover the whole trek at your request.

Inclusions

- Meals as stated in the itinerary.
- All accommodation.
- All transfers by private vehicle.
- Services of a Moroccan mountain guide
- Walks Worldwide* kitbag.

Exclusions

- All drinks
- Flights
- Tips for hotel, restaurant and trekking staff.
- Travel to and from UK airports.
- Insurance.

What our clients have said!

'Service from the office was excellent. Everyone was always helpful, friendly and polite on the phone, a copy of the map was sent to me straight away and all the documentation arrived in good time. I had a great time and really enjoyed myself.' **S.S. April 2003.**

'A friend had done a similar trip with you and I liked the itinerary which allowed me to see Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains. Jebel Toubkal was a very achievable summit.' **L.N. April 2003.**

'An interesting itinerary – city and mountains, a walk and a climb.' **S.S. April 2003.**

'You had a good value itinerary that appealed to my current aspirations, combined with a very personalised service from the Ingleton team.' **April 2004.**

'This trip has been the most fun I have had in years and I cannot fault the whole thing, from really friendly initial contact to the completely smooth-running trip itself. Thank you very much.' – **D.P. April 2004.**

Clothing and Equipment Lists

This list is written for spring and autumn departures, but as this tour is offered all year round, you will obviously need warmer clothes during the winter months and less in the height of the summer. A set of light casual clothes will be useful for use in Marrakech on this holiday. On trek you must not worry about how you look: comfort and protection against bad weather and the sun are of prime importance. Because mountain weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment on trek. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive, and experienced backpackers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking boots, stiff soles preferred	1 pair		Sleeping bag (3/4 seasons) plus liner/sewn up sheet	
Trainers	For village and city wear		A variety of plastic bags (rucksacks are not waterproof)	
Socks	2		Torch	
Underwear	2		Lightweight daypack	
“T” shirts	2		Camera, film & accessories	
Long trousers	2		Sunglasses	
Short trousers	1		Reading material	
Long sleeve shirt	2		Washing kit	
Track suit	Optional.		Large water bottle	
Waterproof jacket	1		Loo paper for the trip	
W/proof trousers	1		Towel	
Thermal underwear	Optional - but light and useful if cold		Water purifying tablets (iodine based are best)	
Sunhat	Essential		Gaiters	
Warm jacket/fleece	2		Ice axe and crampons – winter only	
Sweatshirt	1		Gaiters	
Woolly Hat	1		Walking pole(s) – optional	
Gloves	1 pair			
Swimming costume	Optional			
Down jacket	Winter only			

*The following items are most useful and those **in bold type are essential***

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Moisturising cream		Small sewing kit	
Safety pins		Insect repellent	
Penknife (not in hand luggage)		Impact adhesive	
Sweets for energy		Money belt/pouch	
Spare bulbs and batteries		Scissors (not in hand luggage)	
Nail clippers		Earplugs (against dogs and snorers!)	
Cold water detergent		Notebook/diary	
Spare glasses or contact lenses		Boot wax	
Spare boot laces		Suncream - lots of it!	
PASSPORT		MONEY / TC'S	
Pens, balloons etc for the local kids		‘Dry’ hand wash or hand sanitiser	