



## Morocco - On top of Atlas mountains - mt. Toubkal 4167m

### Introduction:

The Moroccan Atlas is a range of exceptional beauty and cultural interest and will reveal to you the unison in which local Berber people and nature live here. Experience the extraordinary hospitality of the local Berber people, the rich texture of North African life and the exotic allure of Marrakech, and you will find out why a growing number of trekkers are choosing this great range, which the ancient Greeks thought to be the home of Atlas!. Though originally sheep herders the Berber tribes have remained mainly ungovernable, retaining their own culture, language, traditions and music. On this trip we make a circle trek around the highest part of Atlas – Toubkal massif, explore numerous Berber villages and valleys, climb 3000m high mountain passes, spend a night at the pristine Ifni lake and climb the top of North Africa – Toubkal peak (4167m).

### Special highlights:

**High Atlas mountains** are a rocky range over 500 kilometres long creating a great diversity of climates and landscapes in Morocco. Several peaks rise over 4000 metres and most of them are readily accessible to walkers. Deep gorges and broad valleys divide the separate areas where for centuries the fascinating and traditionally ferocious Berber people have found refuge and fought back the many invaders who have tried to rule Morocco.

**Mount Toubkal** with its 4167 meter it is the highest peak in The Atlas mountains and North Africa

**Marakech** meaning “The land of God” and known also as “The red city” is a charming and colourful city with lots to explore. Streets are dotted with both ancient and modern buildings. Snake charmers sit outside refined palaces. Bustling marketplaces sell all kinds of wares, and the mysterious Medina (old town) contains nearly two miles of secret passages. Mopeds, mules and Mercedes dart around the city, yet time seems to have slowed down, and the locals pause to make connections with others. Musical events may not be formal and organized, but it’s easy to find yourself swaying to the beat of an impromptu gathering of singers and musicians in the square.

### Itinerary:

**Day 1**  
Arrival in Marrakech – Menara airport. Transfer to the city center for accommodation in a hotel. For travelers landing in Casablanca – please check the state railway company for trains to Marakech at [http://www.oncf.ma/Index\\_en.aspx](http://www.oncf.ma/Index_en.aspx) or ask us for further information

**Day 2**  
Today we start with a transfer to Imlil village(1,800m) important starting point for hiking in the Atlas mountains. En route, from the dusty scrub, palm, citrus

and olive plantations, you pass through a landscape that supports a thriving rural community, as their extensive cultivations and terraced fields indicate. This has been the result of centuries of laborious irrigation by the Berbers. In Imlil we meet our team and once all our baggage is loaded on the mules we start walking towards Tacheddirt village (the highest village in Morocco - 2300m). We pass by the small village Tamatert and soon the trail begins to rise as we climb up to the pass at Tizi n'Tamatert (2279m). Once on the top the vast Imenane valley with numerous scattered villages will reveal its beauty to you. We walk on the upper slopes of the valley and later descend to the pretty village of Ouaneskra and continue, for a further half-hour to Tacheddirt, where we stay in local lodge.

**Hiking time: 5h, Uphill/downhill walking: 560 m/50m (breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

**Day 3**  
After early breakfast we start our first hard day, when we go all the way up to one of the highest passes in Toubkal area Tizi Likemt (3555m) passing shepherds with their flocks of sheep and goats. After lunch on the top we trek down to the shelters of Likemnt where we set our camp. 6 to 7 hours walking. / +1255 // - 800m.

**Hiking time: 6.30 hours; uphill/downhill: 1250m/800m (breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

#### Day 4

We walk along the Ourain river until the Ourain Pass 3100m. From here we have a very nice view over the villages of Amsouzert and to the south face of Toubkal peak. After a rest we trek down to Amsouzert, where we stay overnight in local berber house.

Hiking time: 6-7 hours; uphill/downhill: 400m/1400m

**(breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

#### Day 5

Today's hike is shorter and easier. We start south up the valley of the Assif Izli, through many Berber villages until we arrive at Lake Ifni (2295m) where we'll stop for our picnic in the midst of quiet waters and steep slopes of the looming mountains. Here we set up the camp. You can either stroll around the lakeshore or, according to the season, take a swim in the lake while our evening's meal is being prepared.

Hiking time: 4 hours; uphill/downhill: 400m/0m

**(breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

#### Day 6

We set out in north western direction towards the difficult pass Tizi n'Ounoums (2841m). Once we hike through the pass we stop for a picnic amongst awesome surroundings of the Toubkal Massif. From here we'll continue directly to the Toubkal (ex-Neltner) Refuge (3207m) where we can either bivouac on the surrounding slopes or overnight in the Refuge. Whilst tonight's dinner is being prepared, there'll be ample opportunity to stroll around the area and look at tomorrow's challenge - the summit of the highest peak in North Africa.

Hiking time: 6-7 hours; uphill/downhill: 1000m/100m

**(breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

#### Day 7

**Summit day!** We start early in the morning and ascend Toubkal (4167m) by the North route. We admire great views of the Anti Atlas and the villages of Armed and Imlil. After some time on the peak we descend the same way to Neltner refuge and spend another night there.

Hiking time: 7-8 hours (ascend 4-5h, descend 2-3h; uphill/downhill: 960m/960m

**(breakfast, lunch and dinner)**

#### Day 8

After late breakfast we trek down to Imlil passing by Shamharouch sanctuary and Armed village. Lunch will be served near Armed. From here we have 1 more hour trek down to Imlil. Transfer to Marrakech. Expected arrival at around 17 O'clock. Free time for exploring Marrakech and

Jamal El Fna square (Unesco World Heritage).

Hiking time: 4 hours; uphill/downhill: 0m/1460m

**(breakfast, lunch)**

#### Day 9

Transfer to the airport for departure.

**(breakfast)**

**Included in the price:** Accommodation in double room in hotesl/riads with private facilities (days 1,8), berber house in dormitory with shared facilities (days 2,4,6,7), tent camps (days 3,5), 6 FB (trekking days) and 2 BB (Marakesh stay), all transportation including airport transfers, Berber English speaking mountain guide, mules for luggage transportation, private cook and muleteer team, camping equipment (excluding sleeping bag)

**Excluded from the price:** flight tickets to/from Marakesh/ Casablanca airport; transfer from/to Casablanca airport, insurance, sleeping bag; water and other drinks (can be bought on spot at the villages), lunches and dinners in Marakesh, tips, any personal expenses

**Accommodation and boarding:** double room in hotesl/riads with private facilities (days 1,8), berber house (gite) or refuges in dormitory with shared facilities (days 2,4,6,7), tent camps (days 3,5), 6 days on Full board (trekking days) and 2 BB (rest of the days)

**Tour type:** GT

**Group tour:** min 2 pers

**Difficulty grade:** D

**Best period:** June – October

**Extensions:**

- Additional night in Marakech or Essaouira (at the Atlantic ocean)
- 2 – 5 days trekking/camels riding on the Atlantic coast shoreline
- 3 – 6 days trekking/camel riding in Sahara

*Ask us for details and prices...*

**Food on the treks:**

**Breakfast:** tea, coffee, milk, bread, butter, jam, cheese.

**Picnic lunch:** nuts, fresh Moroccan salad, cheese, tinned tuna fish and sardines\*, bread, fruit, mint tea.

**Dinner:** Tajine (chicken or mutton\* with vegetables), spaghetti, couscous (main courses rotate depending on duration of trek), bread, coffee, tea, cake, fruit. \* Those vegetarians or vegans amongst

us need to pre-advise at time of reservation.

**Equipment and clothing:**

The following equipment must be taken by tourists obligatory: rucksacks (a bigger one, ranging 70-80 l and a smaller one, daypack – 25-35 l); sleeping bag (with comfort temperature about 0 C; able to handle temperatures of – 5 C); thermal trekking underwear (not cotton), ankle supported hiking boots (well broken-in); wind and waterproof jacket (breathable); light jacket; sun hat; woolen or special trekking socks; sun glasses (with side covers suggested for high altitude), sunscreen lotion and lip balm; warm mid-layer (fleece or wool) - for cool mornings and evenings (a duvet jacket is ideal for May and Sept), trainers/sandals for relaxing, woollen hat, gloves and scarf, warm, long trousers (not jeans), swimsuit, bin-bag (to line your rucksack), small towel, water bottle, insect repellent, torch/head lamp trekking poles (optional), wet wipes water purification tablets, Toilet paper and lighter (available locally), personal medical kit (blisters, painkillers, Imodium or other anti-diarrhea tablets, plaster/band aids, antiseptic wipes, dressings, etc) The tents provided for the camping are top quality high-altitude tents for 2 persons. Comfortable foam mattresses are provided.

**Guides:**

Our guides are very experienced local mountaineers and come from one of the more remote valleys in the Atlas where an all-weather road and electricity arrived only a few years ago. They are, like all other Berbers, very hospitable and will guide you through these fascinating areas.

**Cooks:** Our cooks know how important their role is and will provide you will a healthy, carbohydrate rich diet, one that is not only nourishing but delicious.

**Luggage transportation:** During the trekking your main luggage will be transported on mules. Maximum luggage weight per person – 20kg. All you have to carry during the day is a daypack, with daytime essentials such as waterbottle, camera, waterproof gear etc.

**Terrain and route:** we use off beaten rocky mule tracks, that sometimes are invisible and is advisable you follow your guide and

respect his decisions. We follow unmarked countryside and narrow trail lines that connect villages, pastures and valleys. The terrain is rocky and dusty, be prepared for some steep descends and ascends.

## **IMPORTANT TIPS FOR THE HIKERS**

### **Physical fitness**

Although mt. Toubkal is not a technical mountain climb, it is a challenge and the rigors of altitude should not be underestimated. The pace of your ascent coupled with good acclimatization will help you on the climb but it is essential to be mentally and physically prepared before you start. Regular hikes are one of the best ways to prepare, increasing frequency and length, as you get closer to the trek. All aerobic exercises such as cycling, running, swimming and funnily enough aerobics are good for strengthening the cardiovascular system. Generally, any exercise that increases the heart rate for 20 minutes is helpful but don't over do it just before the climb.

### **Altitude and acclimatization**

The maximum altitude attained on this trek is not great and we spend only one night at just above 3000 metres / 10,000 feet. This means that altitude acclimatisation is not usually a problem. However this trek does involve some days with a good deal of ascent and descent and one or two of the days are quite long, although broken with leisurely lunches in the shade. During the trek it is likely that all climbers will experience at least some form of mild altitude sickness. It is caused by the failure of the body to adapt quickly enough to the reduced level of oxygen in the air at an increased altitude. There are many different symptoms but the most common are headaches, light-headedness, nausea, loss of appetite, tingling in the extremities (toes, fingers) and a mild swell of ankles and fingers. These mild forms are not serious and will normally disappear within 48 hours.

### **Other health tips**

All contact lens wearers should take care to remove the lenses at night, as the eye needs to absorb oxygen from the atmosphere. The rarefied conditions of altitude reduce oxygen levels and in extreme cases a Corneal Oedema can develop.

### **Tipping**

For better or worse, tipping is an accepted part of everyday life, and - although it is always at your discretion - you will be expected to tip to reward service. Your Group Leader will be able to give you an indication of when and how much is

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appropriate. This can vary, but please calculate on the basis of 30-40 euro per person (including children) for this trip.

### **Language**

The national language of Morocco is Arabic but French is taught universally throughout the country and is the primary language of commerce and business. A rudimentary knowledge of French will certainly assist your communication with most Moroccans. Second popular language is Spanish. English is not widely spoken though it is becoming more popular particularly with young people. We do recommend that you take a pocket phrase and learn some basics such as common greetings.

### **Climate**

With a huge coastline and great geographical variety, Morocco has many distinct local climates. Marrakech is very hot during the summer months, with maximum daytime temperatures of around 40° C (95° F). Trips earlier in the year may experience some snow on the higher ground and if previous falls have been heavy then higher passes may be impassable requiring the Group Leader to alter the itinerary. This said, generally the weather will be bright and clear with pleasant daytime temperatures, although be prepared for cold nights! July and August are the hottest months of the year and by this time the snow has usually melted. Days will be warm (often hot) and bright, with cool evenings. By September the weather is becoming cooler, and the first light snows may start to fall on the mountain tops. Very generally daytime & night-time temperatures in the mountains are as follows:

**May/June/Sept** Day 25-30°C Night 5-10°C

**July/Aug** Day 30-35°C Night 12-18°C

Of course, all mountain weather is notoriously unpredictable, so be prepared for all conditions. The weather in Marrakech in the summer is usually hot and sunny.

### **INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS**

#### **Casablanca (CMN) (Mohammed V)**

Arline companies which operate are Royal Air Maroc, Iberia Airlines, Easy Jet, Jet4you, etc. The easiest way to get to Marakesh is by the state railway company, more information and timetables at

[http://www.oncf.ma/Index\\_en.aspx](http://www.oncf.ma/Index_en.aspx)

#### **Marrakech – Menara airport (RAK)**

Arline companies which operate are Easy Jet, Ryan air, Thomson airways, Iberia airlines, etc.

### **Berber people**

The Berbers have lived in North Africa for thousands of years and their presence has been recorded as early as 3000 BC. Greeks, Romans, and ancient Egyptians have indicated the presence of Berbers in their records. Today this ethnic group is smaller than it once was. Earlier in their history the Berbers lived in a region that extend from Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean. In the 7th century AD, the Arabs invaded North Africa and pushed the Berbers towards the Atlas Mountains and other areas near the Sahara. The Arabs also brought their Muslim faith to the Berbers at this time. Today the majority of Berbers live in Morocco and Algeria. They make up 40 percent of Morocco's population, 30 percent of Algeria's population and only 1 percent of Tunisia's. The region they inhabit in North Africa is referred to as The Magreb.

The language of the Berbers belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family and it can be broken down into 300 different dialects. Berber is a spoken language and its written form is rarely used or seen.

The physical characteristics of a Berber that distinguish them from other ethnic groups are their build and skin color. They have slight builds and their skin tone can be anywhere from white to near-white to dark brown. The Berbers have intermingled with many other ethnic groups, most commonly the Arabs. As a result, the term Berber relates more to the language spoken and not necessarily to a specific race.

Today's Berbers are Muslim.

However, they also have retained some of their original beliefs and many of their rituals contain animistic references and elements retained from earlier pagan religions. They live in rural areas where they raise sheep and cattle. Nowadays, some have even begun growing crops. In the larger villages, Berbers live in stone houses but in the smaller villages they live in tents or clay huts. Berbers are involved in flour milling, wood carving, and quarrying millstones. They also produce various agricultural implements and utensils for domestic use. Their arts and crafts include the making of pottery, jewelry and goods of leather.

## GENERAL – MOROCCO

### TOUR TYPES & GRADES

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades! Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

**Tour types** Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours: GT: Group tours There is a guide accompanying you throughout the whole trip, meeting you at the airport upon arrival and leaving you at the airport again for departure. We use well-trained and experienced local people with good knowledge of English. The group size is normally 6-12 people, if not specially mentioned.

**Difficulty grades** To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

**D: Challenging Tours** of this level demand that you be really in good shape. The paths are not always in the best condition and the marking can be scarce. There are day-treks with big ascents and descents. Changing weather conditions /even in midsummer/ play an important role when trekking at a very high altitude and may cause changes of the preliminary route. This is to be decided by the mountain guide on the spot. Normally, the treks are 6-8h per day, but some can be longer. Preliminary trekking experience is an advantage, but not necessary if you are really in good shape. Note that during some of the days, you should personally carry your baggage, which is naturally an additional difficulty.

### Visas

Visas are not required for EU and USA citizens. Passports must be valid for at least six months after the end date of the trip.

### Vaccination

Consult your personal doctor before departure for latest health requirements.

### Customs

The following goods may be imported into Morocco without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 400g of tobacco, 1l of spirits and 1l of wine, 5g of perfume, photo camera

### Money and personal expenses:

You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks and extra trips not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and personal things could also be spent. Be prepared with around 100 – 150 euro for such expenses.

**Official currency** is Moroccan Dirham (MAD; symbol Dh) = 100 centimes. Moroccan Dirhams can only be obtained in Morocco. The most convenient way to obtain Dirhams is through an ATM, where official rates automatically apply, but daily withdrawal limits can seem low for customers paying cash for rugs in the souks. National currencies should be exchanged at official bureaux de change only (identified by a golden sign); changing money in the street is illegal. There is no commission charge and visitors will be issued with a receipt which they must keep in order to exchange Moroccan currency back into the original national currency upon departure. The Euro and US Dollar are widely accepted, even preferred. Some credit cards are accepted in larger restaurants, hotels, guest houses and the occasional shop in the souks. Cash can be withdrawn from ATMs in larger towns.

### Exchange Rate Indicators

1.00 GBP = 12.85 MAD  
1.00 USD = 7.88 MAD  
1.00 EUR = 11.33 MAD

### Average costs:

Coffee/tea 8-15 MAD  
Soft drink 10-20 MAD  
Medium beer 20-40 MAD  
Bottle of wine 80-220 MAD  
Bottle of water 8-20 MAD  
Local snack lunch 60-100 MAD  
3-course dinner 80-220 MAD

### Cell phone coverage

Roaming agreements exist with international mobile phone companies. Coverage is mainly available in the cities in the west of Morocco.

Country code: 212. Privately run *téléboutiques* can be found throughout the country, with an attendant to provide advice, change and phonecards.

### Electricity

The voltage in Morocco is generally 220 V, and outlets will fit the two-pin plug known as the Europlug. Watch out for American and Canadian appliances, which are made to use with 110 V. That means that even with an adapter, plugging them into a 220 V socket may damage them. If your appliance is "dual-voltage", it should be fine (it's designed for both 110 and 220 V). If not, you'll need a power converter as well as an adapter.

### Brief about Morocco:

**Territory** – 710,850 sq km (274,461 sq miles).

**Population** – 34,8 million

**Capital city** – Rabat. (1.6 million )

**Largest city:** Casablanca (3,3 million)

**Border countries** – Algeria, Western Sahara

**Coastline:** 1,835 km

**Religions** – Muslim 98.7%, Christian 1.1%, Jewish 0.2%

**Language:** Arabic (official), Berber dialects, French often the language of business, government, and diplomacy

**Government type** - constitutional monarchy

Protected areas: 12 National parks, 3 Nature parks, 16 nature reserves, etc

### Weather

The Moroccan climate varies according to season and region. The coast has a warm, Mediterranean climate tempered on the eastern coast by southwest trade winds. Inland areas have a hotter, drier, continental climate. In the south of the country, the weather is very hot and dry throughout most of the year, though temperatures can drop dramatically at night, especially in the months of December and January. Rain falls from November to March in coastal areas, and the country is mostly dry with high temperatures in summer and a cooler climate in the mountains. Marrakech and Agadir enjoy an average temperature of 21°C (70°F) in the winter.