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Trip Notes

MOROCCO CAMEL TREK

Trip code: AMC
Country: Morocco
Amended: December 2009
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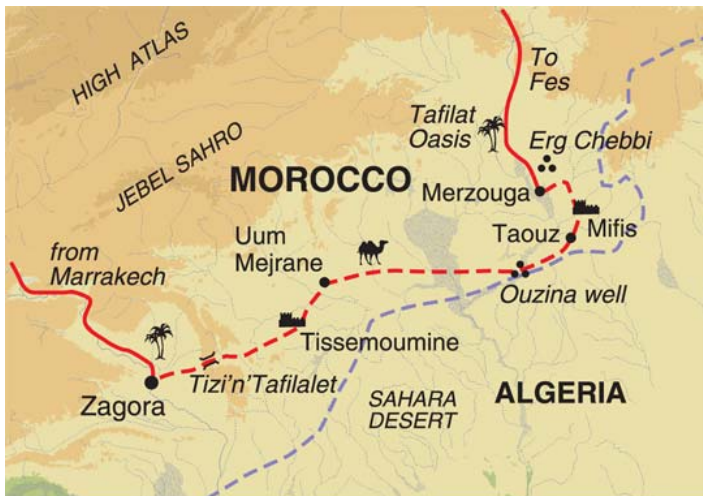
ADULT GROUP **MODERATE CHALLENGING**



HIGHLIGHTS

- Expert knowledge from Michael Asher, our leader and award-winning desert explorer
- A truly unique camel trek through Saharan dunes of Morocco
- Camp amid the highest dunes in Morocco in Erg Chebbi
- See local Berber tribes tend to their animals
- Spend each night in a remote camp beneath the stars

SUMMARY



The Sahara desert stretches across parts of ten countries, but Morocco has always been its most important northern doorway. From time immemorial the oases of southern Morocco were the major termini of the great trading caravans that brought gold, slaves, and ivory from centres such as Timbuktu in the African interior. The old trading caravans are long gone, but in southern Morocco it is still possible to travel at the pace of the camel in the company of desert people, through a fantastic landscape of untouched mountains, plains and sand-dunes.

The Hammada of Guir, where this camel trek takes place, is one of the remotest regions of Morocco - a world of palm-groves, tents and ancient fortress-villages, which are inhabited by tribes of mixed Arab and Berber descent. A few of whom still migrate to the high pastures of the Anti-Atlas with their flocks of goats and sheep. The Hammada, a region of eroded rocky outcrops, deep sided wadis, and rolling vales, lies due south of the Atlas foothills. Alternating between volcanic rock and sandy sheets, between mystical, arid plains, high rolling dunes, and tiny oases where men graze their animals, it experiences warm days and cool nights, heavy with stars. This is an ideal area for trekking or

camel-riding - an area where motor cars are still relatively few, and one can still experience a close connection with the natural world.

Deep Ecologist Michael Asher is rated one of the world's top desert explorers and the winner of awards for desert exploration by camel from the Royal Geographical and Royal Scottish Geographical Societies. He lived for 3 years with a traditional Bedouin tribe in the Sudan as one of them, and became the first man to cross the Sahara from west-to east by camel and on foot - a distance of 4500 miles without backup. A former SAS soldier, the author of 18 books, mostly about the desert and its people, and a fluent speaker of Arabic and Swahili, he is an expert on all aspects of desert travel. A highlight of this trek is learning about the desert from one of its most famous travellers. See more about his philosophy on his website: www.deep-ecology.com or access his biography on Wikipedia under Michael Asher (explorer).

IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This two week tip exploring the Sahara desert between Zagora and Merzouga requires no special technical skills. You will need to be fit and a fairly experienced walker, capable of travelling in a remote region for ten days, without external support. You will be expected to walk at a pace of between three and five kilometres an hour for a maximum of six hours a day, though riding-camels are provided for anyone who needs a rest or simply prefers to ride. As the camels are roped in a caravan, you will not have to handle the camel yourself, but will be taught to mount and dismount. You will not have to carry your own kit or provisions, but will probably find it convenient to take a small daypack with your valuables, water and immediate requirements such as sun-block, sun-glasses etc.

We take a cook with us who will be assisted by the camel men, who will also erect the tents. Water will be drawn from wells en route in the nomad fashion. Though this water is clean and palatable, we recommend you bring purification tablets with you as a further precaution, (such as Biox-Aqua drops).

The area is wilderness, though inhabited by nomads and within reasonable striking distance of roads and permanent settlements. Insect nuisances, snakes and scorpions, are an extremely limited danger during the winter months, though you are advised to carry insect-repellent. Dehydration is an ever-present possibility in this arid environment, but can easily be prevented by consuming a minimum of five litres of water per day. The leader, an experienced bush-medic, will be carrying a medical kit, and will have access to both four-wheel drive and heli-evacuation facilities in an emergency.

British Travel Awards 2009

Exodus Highly Commended in the Small Tour Operator of the Year category.



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JOINING THE TRIP IN LONDON

14 days, depart London Sunday, return Saturday

EXCEPT 6th November, depart London Saturday, return Friday

Itinerary start

The group flight from London is a daytime flight departing on Day 1 of the itinerary.

Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of **Royal Air Maroc** (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly, we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

UK Regional Flights

Exodus can arrange flights from the majority of the UK's regional airports that are more flexible and convenient than if booked separately. Please contact our sales team for details.

Please note that if booking your regional flights other than with Exodus, you must allow a minimum connecting time (in addition to the international check in time) of 1 hour at Gatwick, and 1.5 hours at Heathrow; this is longer than the official minimum connecting time, but baggage handling at Heathrow is known to be subject to delays.

Airport Transfers

Airport transfers are included for those on the group flights. Please note that transfers are not included for clients arriving on any other flight, even if Exodus has booked it. Those arriving from London on non-group flights should read the airport transfer section below for information on reaching the start point. Please check with the Exodus office if you are unsure whether or not a transfer is included.

JOINING THE TRIP IN MARRAKECH

14 days, start Marrakech day 1, end Fez day 14.

Itinerary start

Your trip normally starts at our hotel in Marrakech on the evening of Day 1 of the itinerary listed below. Details of how to reach the start point are given in the Final Joining Instructions. Hotel check-in times are normally from around 2pm.

Airport Transfers

If you require airport transfers, you may (by prior arrangement only) be able to join the group transfer. Transfers are arranged to coincide with the arrival time of the group flight.

Group flights can be rescheduled, so you must check the group flight details 2 weeks before departure. If you do not take this transfer, or miss it, you must make your own way to the joining point at your own expense. Joining the group transfer is free of charge.

If you would like us to organise a private transfer for you upon arrival in Marrakech, the one-way cost is £20 per person (£14pp for 2 people) and is payable before departure. Please ensure that you provide us with all relevant information at least 2 weeks before departure. Please note the cost of a petit taxi (maximum 3 passengers) is approximately 120MDH/£8 if you would like to make your way independently.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

The entries in **bold** at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used (see accommodation section overleaf for key to codes) and meals included (**B**=Breakfast, **L**=Lunch, **D**=Dinner)

Day 1 Start Marrakech We arrive late in the evening and will be transferred directly to our city hotel. **CH**

Day 2 A long day's travel as we journey by minibus to Zagora across the breathtaking High Atlas Mountains via the highest road in Morocco - Tizi N'Tichka Pass (2260m). Descending through the Draa Valley from Ouarzazate, we find ourselves in a very different Morocco, which is filled with fortified villages and Kasbahs (ksuur). We overnight in Zagora - a French colonial outpost in the centre of a vast oasis of two million date palms. **BH (B,L,D)**

Day 3 This morning we meet our camels near Zagora. Each expedition member will be assigned a camel and given lessons in mounting and dismounting, and in camel and desert lore. We set out on trek towards the imposing massifs of Jebels Ghart and Tadghart, which are divided by the narrow pass of Tzi N'Tefilalet. We camp in the rocky desert at the mouth of the pass. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 4 Today we trek through the Tizi N'Tafilalet Pass, the gateway into the desert. This is part of the ancient caravan route between Zagora and the vast Tafilalt oasis to the East. We pass beneath the rocky walls of Jebel Mrah and through a stony expanse of interlocking wadis until we reach our camp amid palm groves, situated west of the traditional fortified village of Amin Ouasif. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 5 We trek across a vast flat gravel plain that gives way to another bottleneck pass, where we follow a very narrow track. This afternoon, we descend into a beautiful acacia forest and spend the night in a shallow wadi close to Tissemoumine. **PC (B,L,D)**

Days 6 Our voyage continues as we cross the plain of Umm Mejrane, an oasis village that was the centre of the famous Ait'Atta - traditional Berber nomads. After a picturesque lunch stop beneath the rocky hills, we descend into the breathtaking valley of Atshanat, where we set up camp amid low dunes and tamarix groves. **PC (B,L,D)**



Day 7 In the early morning, while our camels stock up on water, we may be able to visit the tents of nomad families living nearby. We pass through undulating, rocky desert, low sand dunes and an incredible salt plain on our journey to Tafaraywit. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 8 We trek through a stunning valley between high basalt walls, emerging into a plain covered in acacia scrub. In the afternoon we cross a complex of wadis and Tamarix forest until we reach the village of Ramliyya, where we setup camp. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 9 We trek along the edge of a shimmering salt plain crossing a series of medium-sized sand dunes along the way. We climb up into rocky hills that open out into a stunning valley and we camp in a wadi. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 10 We trek north-east along narrow foothill tracks until we come in sight of Taouz. This was the first outpost of the great Tafilalt Oasis, where a ruined Kasbah stands proudly on a hill. We camp in the desert near Taouz. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 11 Perhaps the most spectacular sight of the trip is the great Erg Chebbi, where there are the tallest dunes in the whole of Morocco. At 300 metres, these dunes are amongst the highest in the world - mountains of sand that were probably once the bed of a lake in prehistoric times. After trying to climb these towering dunes, we camp inside this dune-field and gaze over the beautiful village of Merzouga. **PC (B,L,D)**

Day 12 A short trek brings us to the oasis village of Merzouga, where we leave our camels and transfer to our minibus. We drive north through palm groves and mud brick villages through the villages of Erfoud and Rissani, in the Tafilalalet Oasis. We cross the Middle Atlas mountains passing cedar forests around the ski resort of Ifrane until we reach Fez - the most fascinating of the ancient Imperial cities. **CH (B,L)**

Day 13 The day is free to explore Fez. This fascinating city is the intellectual and religious centre of Morocco. Founded over a thousand years ago, Fez has many mosques and medersas. (theological centres) Including the 9th century Karouine University, whose architecture is very similar to that seen in Moorish Spain. The medina in Fez is one of the largest in the world. In its immense warren of souks (markets) are thousands of craftsmen with their tiny shops opening on to narrow

alleyways. The medina of Fez is a totally absorbing and a unique experience. **CH (B)**

Day 14 Transfer to Fez airport and return home.

For those on group flights, these depart in the early morning and will arrive in the UK the same day.

ACCOMMODATION

We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

KEY TO ACCOMMODATION:

CH Comfortable Hotel, Lodge or Gite - twin rooms with en suite facilities, reliable electricity and water supply, good service and some added amenities.

BH Basic Hotel, Lodge or Gite, Mountain Hut, Village House - Can be communal, often consisting of just a bed and shared facilities. Bed linen not normally provided. Running water, toilets and electricity may be inconsistent or non-existent. Cleanliness is not always assured.

PC Participatory or Basic Camping - normally in two person tents, although sometime es fixed communal tents are used. Organised campsites if used may only have basic facilities. Wild camps may have no facilities provided. The group performs camp chores, although our staff provides advice and assistance.

Single Accommodation A limited number of single rooms are available on this trip at a cost of £100, which applies ONLY to hotel nights. If you would also like a single tent for the duration of the trip then this will cost £170.

Extra Accommodation

If you would like Exodus to organise additional accommodation for you at the start and/or end of your trip, please contact the office at least 4 weeks prior to departure.

FOOD & TRANSPORT

Food

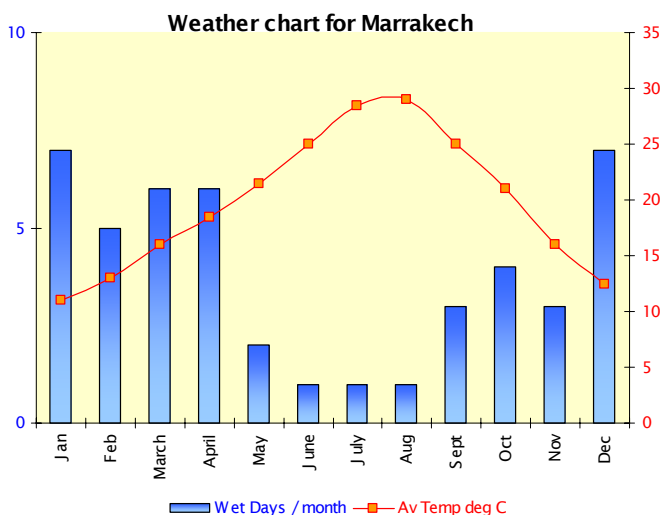
In the itinerary we state which meals are included on each day.

When we are on trek the food will be basic and there will be limited choice. Please advise at least two weeks before departure if you have any special dietary requirements. We suggest you allow approximately £25 for the meals not included. Although water is provided, we also recommend you bring purification tablets with you (such as Biox-Aqua drops).

Transport

Transport to and from the desert will be by minibus. The rest of the trek will be entirely supported by camel. You will have your own camel carrying your personal equipment as well as some of the group equipment, and you will be able to ride as and when you like. The caravan will stop every hour for mounting and dismounting.

WEATHER



Days are generally warm in October-November, warm to cool in December-January. Nights are cool throughout the winter months and may be cold in January with temperatures down to zero. Please note the below chart gives average temperatures in Marrakech.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment.

Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company. Exodus trips are designed to allow a high degree of economic benefit to the local communities; we buy local produce, eat local food and use local services, thus ensuring that as much money as possible is retained within the local economies and the host communities. With our responsible tourism policy we are continually reassessing our holidays, trying at all times to ensure that they are socially, economically and environmentally sound.

Awards for our work on Responsible Tourism

British Travel Awards: Environmentally Responsible Tourism Company.

Responsible Travel Awards: Best Tour Operator.

BA Tourism for Tomorrow Awards: Highly Commended.

For full details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:

www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visa regulations can and do change without notice and if you are not a British passport holder please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

For information on how to obtain visas please call Travcour on 020 7223 5295 or visit their website: <http://www.travcour.com/exodus>

Vaccinations and Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for this trip unless entering from an infected area. We recommend Hepatitis A and tetanus as standards of hygiene can be low in Morocco.

The above information can change at short notice, and as we are not qualified to answer all your questions in regards to travel health we strongly recommend you contact your GP or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

Nomad Travel Clinics are experts in preparing people for travel, providing expert advice on vaccinations, anti-malarials and staying healthy whilst overseas. We have arranged a special 10% discount for Exodus passengers on any vaccinations that you may require. For information visit the community section of our



website or click on this link www.nomadtravel.co.uk/pages/exodus.

For additional information please visit: www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk

Insurance - Are you adequately covered?

Please ask for details of the Exodus insurance policy that has been tailored to provide specific cover for our trips. It is a condition of joining any of our holidays that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs and air ambulance or helicopter rescue services where appropriate). If taking an alternative policy you must be sure that you are covered for any activities that are part of this trip or optional activities that you intend to take part in. For further information please see the insurance section of the Exodus Travel Advice guide or visit www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/travel-insurance.

Local Time is the same as GMT.

Group, Staff and Support

The group will generally be between 8 and 12 people. Michael Asher is the leader and there will be 4-6 camel-handlers and drivers where needed.

The minimum age for clients on this trip is 18 years.

Join the Exodus Online Community:

Don't forget to visit the Community area on our website. You can view our range of Exodus videos and podcasts, read trip write-ups that have featured in the national media and take advantage of some special deals on travel gear and equipment.

In the Compass Café forum you'll find the Departure Lounge where you can discuss your trip with fellow travellers before you depart. When you get back from your holiday remember to upload your images to the relevant trip page on our website. This helps other people see what our holidays are really like and you'll be automatically entered into our monthly photo competition.

To make full use of the Compass Cafe you'll need to join My Exodus. It's free, registration is simple and easy... so what are you waiting for?

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/community>

MONEY MATTERS

Exodus and Local Payments

There is no local payment on this holiday. Exodus no longer uses local payments to cover part of the cost of the holiday.

If you are comparing prices with other operators, please check the total price paid, as we believe that Exodus continues to offer the best balance between value for money and operational quality.

Currency Information

The national currency of Morocco is the Dirham (MDH), with an exchange rate of approximately 7.6 to the US\$ and 14.7 to the UK£.

Exchange rates are correct at the time of publication.

We suggest you take your personal spending money in good condition notes, either in £, Euros or US\$. Euro cheques are not accepted in Morocco. 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 hold of your exchange receipt as you may need to show it at the airport bank at the end of your holiday where it's normally possible to change any unspent Dirham notes back into Euros and sometimes Sterling.

Commission Free Holiday Currency

For your commission free holiday currency, pre loaded cash cards and travellers cheques delivered directly to your door at very competitive rates, visit us on www.currency-express.com/exodus and receive free delivery on orders over £300.

ATM availability & Credit Card Acceptance

Cash points are available and credit cards are widely accepted in Marrakech and Fez.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money

Nearly all the food is included on this trip. We suggest £50 - £100 depending on how much shopping you would like to do.

Tipping (leader and local staff)

Our local staff are paid well and fairly for their work with Exodus and tipping is entirely at your own discretion. However, as a guideline, we suggest you allow a few pounds for tips for the guides, cooks and chameliers - about £4 a day would seem reasonable.

WHAT TO TAKE

Essential Equipment and Clothing

This should be read in conjunction with our 'What to Pack' section in your Travel Advice booklet (sent when you book).

You will need the following: good lightweight walking boots; comfortable shoes (sandals or flip flops); pullover or sweatshirt; light walking trousers; shorts; windproof but lightweight anorak or smock; gloves; hat/scarf (shamagh) ; torch and spare batteries/bulbs (head-torch recommended) ; 2 litre water-bottle (water-bag recommended); pocketknife (store in checked-in luggage); 3-4 season sleeping-bag (stuffable); sleeping mat; day pack; sunglasses; sun block; hand gel; wet wipes and towel. Bactiflox antibiotics are recommended for those who suffer easily from stomach upsets and purification tablets (such as Biox Aqua drops).

Much of the equipment mentioned above is available at very competitive prices at the Exodus online shop, '[Exodus Travel Essentials](http://www.exodus.co.uk/community)' in partnership with Amazon. Please visit www.exodus.co.uk/community for more information.

Baggage and Baggage Allowance

Please use a soft-frame rucksack or kitbag as rigid suitcases are not suitable for carrying by camel. Please check the baggage allowance on your tickets. Exodus kitbags are available for purchase at £25, which includes postage, packing and VAT. Please note that they are available within the UK only.

At time of publication - the standard weight limit for hold baggage on the recommended international carrier for this trip is 20kg. As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check www.baa.com and/or the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

Duvet jackets, sleeping bags, thick mattresses are available for hire through our local agents and must be pre booked through the Exodus office to ensure availability, or prior to departure from Trek Hire UK (<http://www.trekhireuk.com/>). Trek Hire UK can also provide a range of trekking essentials and accessories, from rucksacks to trekking poles. Please note that supplies are limited, and it is advisable to reserve any equipment as early as possible. All equipment for local hire must be booked prior to departure. For further details please ask for our Trek Hire leaflet.

Reading List:

Exodus suggests below a series of books, guides or maps that may be useful or interesting for your trip.

Cadogan Guide to Morocco Rogerson (Cadogan 2004)

A readable and up-to-date guide / Excellent historical information

Impossible Journey Michael Asher (1988)

Michael Asher's trek from west to east across the Sahara

Exodus Travel Essentials Store:

If you are interested in any of these books then you can order them from our very own Exodus shop, '[Exodus Travel Essentials](http://www.exodus.co.uk/community)' in partnership with Amazon.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CLIENTS

Exodus operate a 24 hour duty office for emergencies, which can be contacted on 0044 (0) 1582 644 100.

Anytime that you travel abroad you should take the time to read the warnings in the essential information in the brochure or at www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/essential-information?

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic,

political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between these Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes are the correct version and supersede the brochure. Abnormal conditions or other events beyond our control can prevail at any time, particularly in remote or off the beaten track destinations, therefore all holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

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HOW TO BOOK YOUR TRIP

- 1. Check availability** Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.
- 2. Secure your place** You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.
- 3. Complete your booking and payment** When you're ready to book, go to www.exodus.co.uk for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque.

Book with confidence Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

