

MOROCCO Sahara Desert Trek

This is an Open Challenge itinerary; you can take part on the dates shown and raise money for a charity of your choice. Itineraries for bespoke trips (run for sole charities) may differ slightly, and will have different dates and pricing schedules.

Duration: 10 days / 9 nights

Trip Grade: Moderate

Dates:

4 Mar – 13 Mar 2011
28 Oct – 6 Nov 2011

2 Mar – 11 Mar 2012
26 Oct – 4 Nov 2012

Payment Options:	2011	2012
Fundraising:		
Registration Fee	£299	£299
	+	+
Min. Fundraising Target	£2500	£2600
Self Payment:		
Registration Fee	£299	£299
	+	+
Trip Cost	£1000	£1040

Please note Registration Fee is in addition to Trip Cost / Fundraising Target



Open to Families – for information see below

There is no landscape on earth like the desert! From stony flat expanses scattered with ancient fossils, to perfect wind-blown sand dunes, broken only by the occasional oasis, our trek in the Sahara Desert transports you to another world.



The desert and its incredible night skies provide a feeling of space and of solitude, of nature's power and the transience of mankind, that is both awe-inspiring and humbling. This will be an unforgettable and life-changing challenge.

With proud Berbers as our guides and a small caravan of camels to carry our supplies, we trek 100km through this remarkably varied and stunning landscape. A free day exploring the sights and souks of Marrakech provides a real contrast to our week's challenges, and a great way to celebrate our achievement!

ITINERARY

Day 1: London – Ouarzazate

Depart London bound for Ouarzazate via Casablanca; transfer to hotel. Ouarzazate (pronounced 'Wazzazat') lies just below the High Atlas Mountains and is on the edge of the desert. Night hotel.

Day 2: Ouarzazate – M'Hamid – Dune Camp

After an early breakfast, we have a detailed briefing and then leave for the five-hour drive to M'Hamid, our starting point. Our drive takes us over the low mountains of the Jebel Sarhro and down the 'Valley of a Thousand Kasbahs' into the desert. We have a brief stop in Zagora to buy a shamla (native headscarf) and have our last cold drink before the heat of the desert. On arrival at our start point,

we have lunch while the cameleers load up the camels. Our late afternoon trek takes us firstly across flat open plain and then into Erg Lihoudi, our first taste of small dunes. We make camp at the edge of the dunes for the night. Night camp.

Trek approx 3 hrs



Day 3: Dune Camp – Well Camp

The full colour of the landscape erupts as the sun rises. Hot coffee and a good

breakfast set us up for a good day's trek. We break camp, load the camels and head off across Erg Lihoudi. We walk across the small dunes and around the larger ones. Amongst the dunes are small tamarisk trees that manage to flourish in this harsh environment. Continuing through the small dunes, we can see the Jebel Bani Mountains to the north and dunes to the south. After a good four-hour trek we stop for lunch in the shade of large tree. During the afternoon we walk out of the dunes and onto a flat rocky plateau where we make camp near L'oued L'autruche close to a well. Night camp.

Trek approx 6 hrs

Day 4: Well Camp – Bluff Camp

Leaving camp behind us, we walk across flat, open country with the camels not far behind. The surface is firm and stony with tough grass poking through in places. After around 4km we come to the edge of some low dunes. Skirting to the north of the dunes, we walk on both soft sand and stony plateau where you can find the occasional fossilised sea creature. The hottest part of the day is spent having lunch in



the shade, time to relax and refill the water bottles. In the afternoon we head across lots of beautifully-formed low dunes to an area called Bougarne, where there are several large dunes and clumps of palm trees. The walking is tough and tiring. Sand fills our boots and our feet sink into the small dunes. After an hour we see the large dunes in the distance and head for them. Distance is hard to gauge in the desert and it takes a further two hours to reach the dunes and our campsite perched on a bluff overlooking the dunes. Night camp.

Trek approx 7 hrs

Day 5: Bluff Camp – Chgaga Camp

After a good breakfast we head off down a gully onto the desert floor. We spend the morning crossing hamada, or stony flat desert. We have several short climbs and cross dry and dusty plains. There is very little vegetation around but we manage to find the only tree for miles to have lunch under. When the hottest part of the day has passed we set off across more hamada until we cross a ridge and have a spectacular view of Chgaga, the largest sand dune of the region. We camp below the dunes for the night. Night camp.

Trek approx 7 hrs

Day 6: Chgaga Camp – Chgaga – Jebel Bani Camp

The day starts with the spectacular dune climb and incredible views from the top of Chgaga – a 100m height gain. To the south are rolling dunes as far as you can see; to the north, hamada and the Jebel Bani. After taking in the view, we have fun descending the dune along one of the narrow ridges. Regrouping at the bottom and meeting up with the camels, we refill the water bottles and walk through low dunes. We spend the whole day in amongst the dunes, passing the occasional nomadic encampment and small clump of palm trees. In the late afternoon we finally reappear from the dunes and head out across flat desert

and acacia trees to our campsite near a well and just below the Jebel Bani. Night camp.

Trek approx 7 hrs



Day 7: Jebel Bani Camp – Saltpan Camp

Today is our day of mirages and flat salt pans. We firstly walk across several kilometres of hamada with dunes lying to the south. Gradually the acacia trees vanish and we are left in a spectacularly flat open saltpan. Once again distances are impossible to gauge and the views shimmer in the heat. There is no cover for lunch so we put one of the tents up to give us shade. We are getting close to our hundredth kilometre now; the last few are completed crossing this remote and desolate place. Our last night is spent on the saltpan with its (usually) incredible sunset. Night camp.

Trek approx 7 hrs

Day 8: Saltpan Camp – Fom Zguid – Marrakech

The day starts early for our sunrise walk towards the edge of the desert – an unforgettable experience. We load into the trucks and landrovers and drive the last bumpy section across the desert piste to the tarmac road. The exciting journey in the back of the open trucks is great fun if a little dusty. On arriving at the tarmac road, we transfer to our bus and cross the stunning High Atlas Mountains to Marrakech, where we will celebrate in style! Night hotel.

(Dinner not included)

Trek approx 2 hrs; drive approx 5 hrs

Day 9: Free Day Marrakech

We have the day free to explore the amazing sights of the Jma El Fnay, the main square, and shop for souvenirs in the bustling souks for which Marrakech is renowned.

(Lunch and dinner not included)

Day 10: Early transfer to airport; depart for London

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR COST

All accommodation is included, as well as all flights and transfers, camping equipment (except sleeping bag and sleeping mat), all meals except three as specified in the itinerary, entrance to any sites visited as part of the itinerary.

Experienced Discover Adventure leaders and doctor (depending on final group size) are also included, along with a local support crew of guides, cooks, cameleers and drivers.

It does not include personal travel insurance, airline fuel supplement if charged by the airline, three meals as specified, tip for local crew, or international departure tax. It also does not include any entrance fees for any optional sites you may wish to visit. There is an optional city tour of Marrakech on your free day (not included.)

Costs in Morocco

We recommend you budget for the following costs in-country:

- Tips for Local Crew (see below): £25
- Meals not included: £40-45

Remember to allow extra for drinks, souvenirs & other personal expenses. This recommendation is a guideline only. Please note that costs may fluctuate and we have no control over any changes.



We strongly recommend you carry a credit card in case of personal emergency.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Group flights leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

We are most likely to fly with Royal Air Maroc. However, we don't always fly with the same airline so this is a guideline only. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure.

Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline.

Connecting Flights

If you book flights to Heathrow or Gatwick, it is your responsibility to allow plenty of time to connect to the group flight and to cope with any flight schedule changes. Please be aware that the best deals allow little flexibility if you need to change them. We regret that we are unable to book connecting flights for you.

Transit Stops

When booking group flights we endeavour to find the best flights that match our itinerary. There are often no direct flights to our destination, so do be prepared for transit stops: bring a good book or chat to your fellow trekkers! Airlines that do offer direct flights rarely offer competitive rates for groups. Please remember that the main purpose of our trips is to raise money for charity!

Flying Separately

If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost. You will be responsible for making your own arrangements for meeting the rest of the group, though we can advise you. We need to know if you do not require our group flight as early as possible; please complete the form in the information pack you'll be sent with your booking confirmation.

ACCOMMODATION

When camping, water is scarce and reserved for drinking – for obvious reasons. However there should be a couple of opportunities to wash when we camp near wells. Wet-wipes are recommended for other days! We use good hotels with shower and toilet in each room at the start and end of the



trip. Please do not expect the same standards as you would in the UK!

FOOD

All food is included when camping. The food is great, very varied and there is plenty of it! 3 meals as specified in the itinerary are not included.

Dietary Requirements

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we will be in rural areas and among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat you may wish to bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for!

We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow trekkers and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Other Meals

Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally when we are in towns or cities and you are free to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit every budget.

PASSPORT, VISA & VACCINATIONS

A valid ten-year passport is essential; it should be valid for at least 6 months after arrival in Morocco. There is currently no visa requirement for UK citizens. Other nationalities should check entry requirements.

We insist that you have had a Tetanus injection in the last ten years, and highly recommend protection against Polio, Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

TREKKING INFORMATION

Terrain

We trek over stony, firm desert floor (hamada) and loose, soft, and in places steep, sand dunes. We are travelling through remote desert and through the occasional small oasis.

FITNESS WARNING: DESIGNED TO BE CHALLENGING!

This trek is designed to be challenging for those of good health and fitness, and is achievable for most people provided they train well in advance. We will supply you with a thorough training guide when you have registered. Training for the challenge is all part of the preparation and requires commitment! Without it, you will find the trek less enjoyable – and we want you to have the time of your life!

Trekking Distances

You will trek approximately 100km on this trip overall. Because of the varied terrain and lack of accurate maps, it's impossible to give accurate daily distances; moreover these can vary year to year because of the natural movement of the dunes. It's also much more useful when training to think about the hours you need to walk for!

We are always happy to talk through the trip in more detail with you if you are worried about your fitness at any stage.



Clothing & Equipment

The information below gives you an idea of the climate, but be prepared for all weathers and temperatures. Weather conditions can change quickly. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, as well as details on useful discounts you are entitled to as a Discover Adventure customer. We are always available if you need advice.

Weather

Days in the desert are usually clear and sunny, and it can get very hot. Nights are colder and the temperature drops noticeably as soon as the sun sets. There may even be frost on the tents some mornings. It can rain in this part of the desert, though it is not common.

November – March 8 – 30°C

Fitness Levels

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience and fitness, all ages and backgrounds. We expect all participants to train hard in advance to achieve this challenge, but we respect everyone's limits. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race.



For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners will find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

TRAINING WEEKENDS: £119 SPECIAL OFFER

Only when you book online at the same time as registering for your main challenge

Discover Adventure Training Weekends in Snowdonia National Park are designed to help you prepare for your challenge. Whether you use the weekend to gauge your fitness, get your training back on track, boost your confidence, get advice or meet other trekkers, you're bound to find it incredibly useful!

For dates and further information see our brochure or website.

TRIP SUPPORT

Discover Adventure Crew

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader.



All our leaders are from the UK or other English-speaking countries. Most work for us on an ad-hoc basis and have 'real' jobs in-between trips! We never send our leaders to the same destination for months on end – we want them to be as enthusiastic about your trip as you are.

Although our leaders are trained in expedition first-aid, they are accompanied by an expedition doctor or medic, who is there to look after the well-being of the whole group and deal with any incidents. They help the leaders to ensure the trip runs smoothly and encourage you when things get tough.

The number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group, but an average-sized group in Morocco would be led by two leaders and a doctor. At Discover Adventure we pride ourselves on our high leader:

trekker ratio and believe it leads to greater trip enjoyment as well as excellent trip safety.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, drivers, cameleers and cooks. Your local guide knows the local area well, and is a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Drivers, cooks and cameleers do not always speak English but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew works closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.



Tips for Local Crew

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! See 'Costs in Morocco' above for a guideline amount; your leader will let you know if there is any change to this guideline. All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in this country is far below what you would spend on a normal night out.

Luggage

Vehicles take the group to the start of the trek and pick us up at the end. All luggage, food, water and camping equipment is carried by camels accompanied by cameleers, and some landrovers.

It is essential that your luggage is carried in either a soft expedition kitbag or soft rucksack. These are easily loaded onto the camels. Hard-sided luggage is completely unsuitable. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already.

You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.



TRIP SAFETY

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with radios and emergency satellite phones, extensive medical kit and other safety apparatus where necessary. They always have access to our 24-hour emergency back-up in the UK. Our leaders are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary should local conditions dictate.

Pre-trip administration – such as compulsory medical questionnaires and travel insurance – is all done with your safety in mind.



OPEN TO FAMILIES

This symbol means this challenge is suitable for young people aged 14 and over, provided they are fit and prepared to train in advance! They must be accompanied by at least one parent or legal guardian.



WORLDWIDE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Long before 'Responsible Tourism' became a recognised phrase, we designed and ran our trips to ensure they made minimum impact on the environment and a positive impact on the local communities we pass through. AITO, our Trade Association, has recognised the work we do in this area and has awarded us 4 stars as a Responsible Tour Operator.

Discover Adventure Projects

We are supporting a tree-planting project in Peru and a children's home in Tanzania on a long-term basis. If you would like to 'give something back' please consider donating £5 to our projects when you sign up. Please see our website for more details.

Carbon Offsetting

We encourage all our customers to offset emissions connected with their trip. You can offset at any time in the lead-up to departure by visiting Climate Care via our website and making a donation to a worthwhile project supported by them. Alternatively, if you wish to take more practical action in the UK you can volunteer for a day with BTCV and work on an environmental project local to you. Work may include construction footpaths, dry stone walling, creating wildlife habitats or planting trees in your community. Make your volunteer pledge by going to www.btcv.org/dapledge



Please contact the Discover Adventure office with any queries, using the contact information at the foot of this page.

Copyright Discover Adventure 1998 / Updated 2010