



Trip Dossier for Morocco – Atlas Mule Train

Trip Code: FMAM Issue date: 30 July 2009 Valid from: 15 October 2009

This holiday is for families with younger children. You'll see fire-eaters and snake charmers in old Marrakech and then explore the tranquil Berber villages of the Atlas, where easy walks with picnic lunches allow you to explore the mountains. While you walk, your children ride mules, so stretch your legs and take in the clear mountain air and views. Finally, you'll have a few days in Essaouira and discover alleyways packed with local crafts or relax on the beach.

Day 1 Fly to Marrakech

You depart from London for the flight to Marrakech. Transfer to your hotel; situated within easy reach of the main square (Djemma El Fna) in the old part of Marrakech. The square comes alive in the evening provides a multitude of entertainment, ranging from snake-charmers, fortune-tellers, magicians, water-sellers, acrobats, sword-swallowers, story tellers and artists to a variety of extremely talented Moroccan and 'world' musicians.
Hotel for 2 nights

Day 2 City Tour of Marrakech and time to explore the souks

This morning you'll start the morning on a tour by horse-drawn carriage (calesh) and then explore this vibrant old city, taking in some of its palaces, the beautifully preserved Ben Youssef Koranic school and of course, the *souk* (bazaar) – a mass of tiny alleyways full of shops, stalls and tiny workshops where local craftsmen make and sell their wares. It's easy to get lost in this winding maze, but don't worry, that's part of the fun; just wander at your own pace and eventually you'll emerge back at the main square. The afternoon is left free so you can carry on shopping and souvenir hunting if you want, but our advice is to head back to the hotel to relax, have a swim or take a 'siesta'. Then, at around sunset, head back to the Djemma El Fna as it starts to come to life. Having a drink in one of the many rooftop cafés overlooking the square is a good way to watch the entertainment. Alternatively, you may wish to visit the Saadien Tombs – one of the few remaining landmarks of an important era in the fascinating history of Morocco. There are countless other things to do – including experiencing a traditional *hammam* (steam bath and massage). **(breakfast)**

Day 3 Drive and walk to Aremd. Time to explore the local area

After breakfast you'll leave the hustle and bustle of Marrakech behind and head into the tranquil villages of the mighty Atlas, a drive of about 2 hours. The road ends at Imlil (1740 metres) and from here you'll join our mules and walk (the children can ride if they prefer) to your base in the village of Aremd (1900 metres). The walk is relatively easy and takes about an hour and a half at a slow pace. On arrival, you'll check into your guesthouse and have a picnic lunch. Then, in the afternoon, there will be time to explore the village.

Try to slow down to the pace of village life; there's nothing particularly to do – it's all about 'just being there', observing a very different and simple way of life and perhaps having a chance encounter with a local family. The village itself is set below Mount Toubkal, which forms a panoramic back-drop. Rooms at the guest house are normally four beds to each room with shared bathroom facilities. **Simple guesthouse (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 4 Walk to Tacheddirt

After breakfast, your mountain guide will help you acclimatise and get used to local conditions. Mules will accompany you to carry supplies and small children if required and a team of muleteers and cooks accompany us for the next few days. You will start by descending back towards Imlil, and after passing below the village of Tagadirt join a track which takes you across a pass and into the Imenane valley. You have a choice of following the large sweeping zigzags of the dirt road, or the shorter, slightly steeper and rougher, but well-graded, mule tracks. Climbing above the last village of Tamatert, you enter a conifer plantation, eventually arriving at the col of Tizi-n-Tamatert (2279 metres). It's a challenging walk, but there's plenty of shade and we're in no hurry. It's satisfying to reach to the top of the pass and from here there are magnificent views of the upper Imenane valley and the mountains of Oukaimeden (3262 metres), Angour (3614 metres) and Iguenouane (3882 metres). After stopping at a grassy spot for lunch, the afternoon is easier and follows a broad track which contours gently around the mountain slopes. We'll continue to the village of Tacheddirt, the highest in the valley, and enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding hills. **Simple hotel (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 5 Explore the local area Tacheddirt

The following day we will explore the local area. Tacheddirt is reputedly the highest permanently inhabited village in North Africa. An authentic Berber village, with terracing irrigated fields, chickens and goats running around.

Friendly Berber people seated in their tiny stone houses. It may be possible to visit a local school so please bring pencils, rubbers, sharpeners, textbooks etc if you would like to contribute to local education.

Day 6 Walk to Aremd

The children will have their favourite mule by now and it is downhill all the way today as you follow the winding Imenane Valley along good mule tracks and little-used tracks. You'll pass small traditional villages with their terraced gardens and orchards carved out of the rocky backdrop. Your picnic lunch will normally be taken next to a welcome spring. There is plenty of birdlife and wildflowers to spot. You'll arrive at Aremd, this afternoon you are free to explore. **Simple guesthouse (breakfast)**

Day 7 Drive to Essaouira, beach relaxation

Today you'll be picked up from the end of the road near Imsker and driven to the coast to Essaouira a former pirates' lair, but now an active fishing port and attractive resort, built around the beautiful old walled town. It's not a terribly interesting drive, so bring along reading material and games for the children. But remember to watch out for tree-climbing goats! The region is almost sub-tropical, with sheltered valleys where bananas are cultivated intensively. Much of the higher ground is given over to argan trees, and it is here that you're likely to spot the improbable sight of a tree full of goats - the goats climb into the trees to eat whatever they can. Fortunately, argan trees are largely resistant to this kind of assault. On arrival in Essaouira, vehicles cannot enter the narrow alley of the medina, where our hotel is situated, so your luggage is transported to your riad by a local barrowman. This very comfortable hotel/riad, built around a tranquil central courtyard, is well-situated in the heart of the town. **2 nights - Hotel (breakfast)**

Day 8 In Essaouira

After the travelling it's great to have a free day, so your time here is flexible so you can relax and unwind in the balmy Atlantic climate. The fishing port of Essaouira has expanded over the last few decades to become one of Morocco's premier resorts. It has wide sandy beaches, where you can hire camels, go for long walks or even go kite-surfing. It's an easy place to while away the last day of your tour. The town itself is a delight - its pleasantly uncomplicated layout makes it a pleasure to wander, and lots of fixed price shops seem to have a way of winking out whatever cash you have to spend on the regional speciality: finely carved articles of *thuya* wood. Needless to say, Essaouira is also a great place to eat fish and there are restaurants a-plenty to try out, or you can eat at a fresh fish stall on the quayside! **(breakfast)**

Day 9 Morning in Essaouira and transfer to Marrakech

Enjoy the morning on the beach, and then this afternoon you'll be driven to your hotel in Marrakech, allowing time for final souvenir shopping, and a look at the activities in the Djemma El Fna. **Hotel (breakfast)**

Day 10 Fly to London

This morning you are transferred to Marrakech Airport for your return flight to the UK. There will be time for some last minute souvenir shopping at the airport.

To see photos related to this trip, go to our website at www.familiesworldwide.co.uk

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.

Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Is this right for your family? You'll stay in simple guesthouses/gites in the Atlas; elsewhere in mid-range hotels/riads. There are no babysitting or child-minding facilities, but the trip is designed with youngsters in mind. You can bring a papoose/back-pack if you want to, though mules are provided for children, allowing parents to explore the mountains (and walk with like-minded parents)

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required.

These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Altitude Warning This trip goes to a relatively high altitude (2279 metres) where there is a slight risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness. Our itineraries are designed to enable everyone to acclimatise to these altitudes, but you should be aware that you may still be affected. Although rare, a number of medical conditions can also reduce your performance at altitude and make you more susceptible to AMS. If you are worried about any pre-existing condition (i.e. heart problems) or unsure of your physical ability, we recommend that you seek medical advice prior to booking.

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 and on trek you can expect fresher and cooler air than in Marrakech, where, during July and August, temperatures can soar to 45°C! There will probably be snow in the mountains in January and February (even as late as March/April) and whilst on trek you can expect colder air than in Marrakech. On clear, sunny days it will be pleasantly warm **but with very cold, crisp nights**. During the winter and spring months it can get **extremely** cold from late afternoon onwards, with temperatures often feeling as cold inside as outside, without the luxuries of central heating that we are generally used to! In March and April there will probably be snow covering the tops of the mountains. Rain or even snow can fall at this time of year in the mountains, but this is usually only in the form of short, sharp storms, which occasionally fall with dramatic intensity. On clear, sunny days it will be pleasantly hot. Expect cooler temperatures in the mountains. Usually 3°C drop per thousand feet.

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

Accommodation Accommodation in the mountains is in simple Berber guesthouse and hotels where you require a sleeping bag. In Marrakech we use a more modern hotel with private facilities and where possible a swimming pool and we stay in an excellent hotel in Essaouira. In Aremd you sleep in a simple guesthouse, which has shared facilities showers, toilet and a restaurant. In Tacheddirt we sleep in a newly constructed hotel which provides basic facilities in communal-style 'dormitories', again with shared facilities. If you would like to upgrade your hotel in Marrakech, please ask us for details. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

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.

During your time in the mountains you'll eat locally produced tagines and cous-cous, together with food purchased in Marrakech and some supplies brought out from England. 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. Vegetarians will usually find that there is generally little difficulty on this tour where we predominately cook for ourselves. However, please make sure that you advise Families Worldwide at the time of booking if you have any special dietary requirements. If necessary please 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. Most trekkers like to bring with them a supply of their favourite snacks to munch 'en route'.

Currency The unit of currency is the Moroccan Dirham (MAD or Dh). At the time of writing (July 2009) UK £1 = MAD 12.40. You will need to change all the money that you will need for the trek at the start in Marrakech or at the airport, as there are no exchange facilities on the trek. There is a bureau de change in Djemma El Fna, but you can also use the banks ATM machines. Please ask your guide to direct you to the nearest bank. When



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bartering in the souks use Dirhams or Euros, credit cards are accepted in hotels, large shops and some restaurants.

Please note when departing Morocco you are not allowed to leave the country with large amount of Moroccan Dirhams and you maybe asked to exchange this back into Pounds Sterling. At the airport, the cafes in the departure lounge accept Dirhams – but the duty free shops are priced in Euros. You can of course pay for goods at the airport with Visa or Mastercard, Euros and Pound Sterling.

Local Costs in Morocco

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.60
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£1.00
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.90
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.25
A bottle of beer	£2.25
Tea or coffee	£0.90
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£3.50
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£6.50
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£9.00

**Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.*

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. 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. As a guideline, each person should allow £2 per day to cover the tips for the Moroccan trekking team including your tour leader. For a family of four allow MAD1200 for the whole tour. We recommend you nominate one person in the group to distribute the tip.

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.

Time Morocco is GMT.

Culture Shock As Morocco is an Islamic country we ask all participants to consider how they dress in cities and villages. It is expected that women will cover legs and shoulders, although, as Morocco becomes more westernised, even local people are becoming more relaxed about this. In the mountains shorts are acceptable for walking, but both men and women should wear long trousers or a long skirt when staying in a village. Please do not simply look at other tourists and feel that what they are wearing is correct – as you will never know what 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.

RAMADAN 2010 11th August – 8th September 2010 (dates not fixed but dependent on the lunar calendar): Please note that Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world, during which time the followers of Islam should not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. There may be some limitations to services and disruptions to schedules during Ramadan, but generally our tours still operate effectively during this period and food is available to non-Muslims throughout the day in most countries. Please be aware of the local sensitivities during the day and bear in mind that the evening breaking of the fast is usually an exciting and celebratory period! (1st August to 29th August 2011)

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Packing List Please refer to our separate "packing list"



Clothing & Equipment List for Morocco – Atlas Mule Train

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A set of light casual clothes will be useful in Marrakech on this holiday. While in the mountains, 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 variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old well-worn clothes rather than expensive new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment on trek.

In mountain areas conditions can change quickly without warning so you must ensure that you are prepared. In the Autumn, Winter and Spring (Feb-May), bring warm, windproof and waterproof clothing. The weather can change from hot sunshine to snow or hail and back again within hours, so please prepare for all eventualities.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Boots	1 pair (optional)		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Sleeping Bag 2-season in Jul/Aug, 3/ 4-season for other times of the year	
Socks	2 thick and 2 thin		Sleeping Bag Liner cotton or silk	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Lightweight daypack – 25 litres	
Waterproof Trousers	Optional in summer		First Aid Kit	
Thermal Underwear	Not essential in summer		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3+		Sunscreen – Lots of it!	
Long Walking Trousers or Skirt	2+		Insect Repellent with high DEET content	
Shorts** /Short Trousers	2		Torch and Batteries	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Camera, Memory Card & Accessories	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Towel	
Thick Fleece	Not essential in summer		Washing Kit – “dry” hand-wash & wet wipes are useful	
Warm jacket	1		Loo kit (toilet paper/tissues)	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1			
Sunhat / Baseball cap /Shesh* (*nomad-style bandana)	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Binoculars - optional	
Swim Wear	Optional		Sweets and Trail Snacks	
Warm Hat and gloves Woolly or fleece (not essential in summer)	1		Bicycle helmet – recommended for children riding on the mules	

**shorts/ short trousers: are fine for children, but we recommend adults cover their legs (at least to the knee) and upper arms.

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport		Universal travelling adapter	
Visa (if required)		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Guide Book & map	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Earplugs	
Credit Cards/Visa		Small Calculator	
Insurance Documents		Small Cotton Pillow Case – pop in towel for pillow	
Trip Information And Itinerary		Small presents for local kids in the mountains – pencils, balloons, books, football, tennis balls, bubbles	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Small kite for your children – great in the mountains and Essaouira	

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions**, please visit www.baa.com for details

MAD 110 per sleeping bag and per day of use in camps or gîtes - due limited stock please advise Families Worldwide in advance if you wish to hire sleeping bags. Please pay locally for the hire of the sleeping bags.

