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## Trip Dossier for Morocco – Bougmez Boogie

**Trip Code:** FMBB **Issue date:** 10 August 2009 **Valid from:** 17 October 2009

This is a trip for families who want to get right off the tourist trail. After exploring the legendary bazaars of the imperial city of Marrakech, undoubtedly one of North Africa's most fascinating destinations, you'll drive via the spectacular waterfall of Cascades d'Ouzoud, to the Central High Atlas region. There, where the road ends, you enter the extraordinary Bougmez Valley - nicknamed the "Happy Valley" - an area seen by few outsiders where life has hardly changed for centuries. The Berber people who live in the valley still have relatively little contact with the outside world and are extremely welcome and hospitable. By walking and riding mules, you'll see stunning mountains and explore tiny villages. You'll even dine with a local family and meet semi-nomads to learn about their life in the Atlas. Although only a few hours from home, it seems like a million miles.

### Day 1 Fly to Marrakech

Depart London to fly to Marrakech and transfer to your hotel. Like many North African cities, Marrakech is divided into two distinct parts: the old medina and the modern city (Guéliz) that was built by the French. It has long been a place, where two cultures meet - the mountain-dwelling Berbers and the desert peoples of the South. A short taxi ride from your hotel is the great open square of Djemma el-Fna, in the old part of Marrakech beside the souk. This is the focal point of evening activity and - like a scene from *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights* - is thronged with crowds enthralled by traditional performers that range from snake-charmers, fortune-tellers, magicians, acrobats, sword-swallowers, story tellers, water-sellers and artists to highly talented Moroccan and 'World' musicians. **Hotel**

### Day 2 In Marrakech

This morning you'll explore the vibrant old city, visiting the beautifully preserved Ben Youssef Koranic School and, of course, the colourful souk (bazaar) - a maze of tiny winding alleyways full of shops, stalls and tiny workshops where local craftsmen make and sell their wares. It's easy to get lost - but don't worry, that's all 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 hunting for souvenirs if you wish, but our advice is to head back to the hotel to relax, have a swim or take a siesta. Alternatively you may wish to visit the Saadien Tombs - one of the few remaining landmarks of an important era in Morocco's fascinating history. There are countless other things to do, including the invigorating experience of a traditional *hammam* (steam bath and massage). Then, around sunset, we suggest heading 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. **Hotel (breakfast)**

### Day 3 Cascades d'Ouzoud & Bougmez Valley (45 mins walk)

This morning after breakfast, you set off for the drive to the Bougmez Valley. It's not much more than 200 kilometres from Marrakech, but we'll make a stop at Morocco's most spectacular waterfall, so it'll take most of the day to get there. The three-tiered falls of the Cascades d'Ouzoud are memorable for their beauty as well as the cheeky daring of the resident Barbary apes. From here, the road winds over a high pass before dropping to the floor of the fertile Bougmez Valley, at the heart of the M'Goun region. Although this road was finished in 2001, the valley still remains one of Morocco's best-kept secrets. The Berber people who live here use local materials to build their *tigherms* (houses), animal pens and *agadirs* (fortified granaries), and the slopes of the valley are studded with flat-roofed structures that blend in with their surroundings in total harmony. *Pisé* (adobe) is still a viable alternative to concrete, and the architecture is so pure that architectural students come to observe construction techniques here that haven't changed for centuries - and the valley has the feel of a remote mountain kingdom that time has passed by. **4 nights - Gite (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

### Day 4 Exploring the Bougmez Valley (2½ hr walk)

Today is an easy day so you can familiarise yourselves with your new surroundings. Life here is still governed by the seasons: in winter, snow softens the landscape, while in summer the patchwork of neatly tended green fields on the valley floor are in stark contrast to the bare rock of the mountainsides. After a leisurely breakfast, you'll go out for a short walk to get your bearings - the many paths and mule tracks that thread their way across the hills offer endless possibilities. Then, later in the day you'll meet a local family, maybe learn how to prepare a *tagine* (a Moroccan stew traditionally slow-cooked over charcoal in a ceramic dish with a pointed lid), drink mint tea - with lots of ritual pouring from an alarming height! - and play with the local kids. Our simple gite in the hamlet of Ikhf n'Ighir makes an ideal base and offers a unique insight into Berber culture - and by staying here and injecting money into the local economy, you're effectively helping to preserve both the village and the landscape.



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## Day 5 Walking in the Bougmez Valley (5hrs walk)

The mountains of the Central High Atlas are more remote, and thus less visited, than those of the High Atlas with their well-developed trekking routes - so walking here is an absolute delight! The lush Bougmez Valley lies enclosed between the massifs of Jbel Tizal to the north and Jbel Waougoulzat to the south. Villages built of mud-brick nestle against the hillsides, surrounded by terraced fields and orchards with peach trees, apricots and roses, while the long ridge of the Mgoun Massif looms on the southern skyline. Its highest point, Irhil Mgoun (4068m) is only one hundred metres lower than North Africa's highest peak, Jebel Toubkal (4167m) to the south of Marrakech, but feels a lot more remote. Today you'll set out on a full day walk with your guide, approximately 5hrs walking with stops en route and a picnic lunch. Along the way you may see members of the semi-nomadic Aït Atta tribe who still practice the transhumance, and move with their herds in spring from the low lying Jbel Sahro up to the elevated summer pastures of the Central High Atlas, then back again before the winter snows set in. It's a fascinating opportunity to spend some time with them and learn about their way of life.

## Day 6 Walk and ride to Agouti (3hrs walk)

Today you walk on paths that lead west along the enchanting Bougmez Valley. The valley floor is lined with tiny hamlets and it's sometimes difficult to say where one ends and another starts. Your route takes you past terraced gardens, orchards and friendly Berber farmers. It's easy walking, but in addition to your guide you'll be accompanied by a mule or two plus muleteer, in case the children get tired and need to ride, and you'll stop for a picnic lunch en route. All baggage is transported by vehicle to the next stop, another comfortable gite in Agouti. En route you'll pass the village of Tabant, whose Sunday *souk* (market) is the focal point of life in the valley, where people congregate to buy, sell and exchange news. It's also home to the national training school for mountain guides, many of whom come from this region. Just to the north of the village, on top of a pyramid-shaped hill, is the circular shrine to Sidi Moussa, who supposedly helps young women to find a husband and marry. In the afternoon you'll continue to Agouti village at the other end of the "Happy Valley" of Bougmez for the final chapter in your stay.

## Day 7 Marrakech

Leaving the majestic peaks of the Atlas behind, you drive back to Marrakech via Azilal. The bustle of the 'Red City' can come as something of a shock after the calm of the mountains, but there's still lots to do and see. On arrival the rest of the day is left free for you to enjoy the souks and shop for souvenirs, whether it be a carpet or jewellery, spices or dates. And if it all gets a bit too much you can retire to a café overlooking Djemma El Fna and sip mint tea while the entertainment unfolds. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## Day 8 Fly to London

In the morning you'll transfer to Marrakech airport for your return flight to London. **(Breakfast)**

To see photos related to this trip, go to our website at [www.familiesworldwide.co.uk](http://www.familiesworldwide.co.uk)

## Extension to Essaouira

You can extend your stay to visit the coast at Essaouira. If so, the itinerary varies from the above as follows:

### Day 7 Morning drive to Marrakech via Azilal; afternoon drive to Essaouira

Following breakfast at the gite, you'll drive back to Marrakech. After a brief stop for lunch and to pick up any baggage you may have left in storage at the hotel, you'll bid farewell to the rest of the group and continue by road to the Atlantic coast. It's not the most interesting of drives, so bring some reading material and games for the children. 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 - they climb into the trees to eat whatever they can. Fortunately, argan trees are resistant to this kind of assault. At Essaouira vehicles are not allowed to enter the narrow alleyways of the medina, where your hotel is situated, so agree a price with a local barrow-man (10-20 dirhams) and ask for your Hotel/riad. Located in the heart of Essaouira, the word "riad" in Arabic (ar-Riyād,) means "the gardens". It designates a traditional Arabic courtyard house with an interior garden - the patio or inner courtyard, often with a fountain, surrounded by orange trees, flowers and palms, gurgles at the centre of the courtyard. **2 nights – Hotel (breakfast)**

### Day 8 Essaouira

You have plenty of free time to relax and unwind in Essaouira, a former pirates' lair on the balmy Atlantic coast. It has a wide sandy beach, and it's possible to hire a camel at the far end of the beach, go for a long walk or even go kite-surfing. It's an easy place to while away a relaxing few days at the end of your trip. The town itself is a delight – its pleasantly uncomplicated layout makes it a pleasure to wander, and lots of fixed-price shops seem to



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have a way of winking out whatever cash you have to spend on the regional speciality: finely carved articles of thuya wood. The fishing port is colourful and fascinating so, needless to say, Essaouira is also a great place to eat fish - countless stalls and cafes close by offer fresh fish at reasonable prices.

## Day 9 Free time in Essaouira and drive back to Marrakech

Morning is free in Essaouira to relax and/or explore the beach, the *souk* or the town's ramparts. Mid afternoon transfer back to Marrakech (approximately 3 hours drive) - please re-confirm your transfer time with your driver. The rest of the evening is free in Marrakech. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## Day 10 Fly to London

Depending on the departure time of your flight, the morning is free until your transfer to Marrakech International Airport for your return international flight to London.

*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.*

**Climate** In general Morocco has hot, dry summers and mild winters. In the mountains however the weather can be very different from on the plains and you can expect fresher and cooler air than in Marrakech, where, during July and August, temperatures can soar to 45°C! In winter there will probably be snow on the mountains in January and February (maybe even as late as March/April). On clear, sunny days it will be pleasantly warm, but once the sun goes down it can get very cold, and without the luxury of central heating it can feel as cold inside as it does outside! Rain or even snow can fall at this time of year, but usually in the form of short, sharp storms occasionally of dramatic intensity.

Average monthly temperatures in Marrakech.

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

**Is this right for your family?** Suitable for children from seven and up. Although this is a walking trip, mules are available to ride for younger children. Accommodation in the mountains is in simple, traditional Berber houses, in Marrakech we stay in a hotel.

**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](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

**Accommodation** In Marrakech we use a modern hotel of 3 star standard with private facilities and a swimming pool. Accommodation in the mountains is in simple Berber-owned gites - these offer simple rooms with communal showers, with hot water, and European toilets and a dining room (salon). Please take your own sleeping bag for staying in the gites, there are mattresses on the floor to sleep on. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication, please 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** Included meals are indicated in the itinerary. Meals in the village are hygienically prepared and we take in most provisions ourselves. Breakfast is usually continental in style - with some local additions - served with tea or coffee, picnic lunches (where applicable) are simple but adequate. A vegetarian option is always available. For meals not included in the itinerary you should allow £12-15 per person day to cover lunch and dinner. It is possible to eat cheaply in Morocco, but if you choose to eat in expensive restaurants you should



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allow a little more. Your local tour leader/guide will be on hand to make personal recommendations. We recommend you drink plenty of bottled water during your trip.

Moroccan food is excellent. First class fresh produce, with the subtle addition of herbs and spices, is used to produce innumerable *tagines* (stews), *mechoui* (roast lamb), couscous and *pastilla* (pigeon pie). Fresh seasonal fruit is delicious, as are Moroccan cakes and pastries. In Marrakech European - mainly French - food is also available. Bottled mineral water and soft drinks are available almost everywhere. Although you can buy alcohol in Marrakech, our policy is to discourage its use in mountain villages due to local cultural and religious sensitivities. Vegetarians will find that there is generally little difficulty on this tour. 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.

**Currency** The unit of currency is the Moroccan Dirham (MAD or Dh). At the time of writing (July 2009) UK £1 = MAD 12.3 ATMs (cash machine dispensers) are widespread in the cities and provide a convenient means of obtaining cash. However ATMs do not always operate properly. Credit cards are accepted in banks and larger hotels and some souvenir shops. You will need to change all the money that you will need for your stay in the mountains at the start of the trip in Marrakech or at the airport, as there are no exchange facilities in the Bougmez Valley. You can obtain cash at bank ATM machines while you are in Marrakech, just ask your guide to direct you to the nearest bank.

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	£11.00

\*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 traveller should allow £2 per day to cover the tips for the local Moroccan team (approximately 1000MAD in total for a family of four). We recommend you nominate one person in your group to distribute the tips to the trekking staff, drivers and tour leader.

**Language** The official language of Morocco is Moroccan Arabic. There are three Berber languages, Tamazigh - is the language of the High Atlas Berbers. French is widely spoken, but little English outside major tourist centres.

**Time** Morocco is GMT in winter and GMT-1 hour i.e. the same as BST in summer (end of March to end of October).

**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.



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**RAMADAN 2010** 11<sup>th</sup> August – 8<sup>th</sup> 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! (1<sup>st</sup> August to 29<sup>th</sup> 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 – Bougmez Boogie

Trip Code: FMBB Issue date: 10 August 2009 Valid from: 17 October 2009

A set of light casual clothes will be useful in Marrakech. In the Bougmez Valley comfort and protection against the sun and bad weather are important. As mountain weather is so variable, we recommend taking a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Well-worn clothes are better than expensive new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less than we recommend.

Please remember that in mountain areas conditions can change quickly without warning so you must be adequately prepared. In autumn, winter and spring (Easter), you'll need warm and windproof/waterproof clothing.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair (recommended)		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Socks	4+		Sleeping Bag	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3 +		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2 +		Torch and Batteries	
Short Trousers - only for children**	2		Insect Repellent (with high DEET content)	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		High Factor Sunscreen	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Camera, Memory Card +Accessories	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Towel	
Warm Jacket	1		Washing Kit – dry antibacterial hand wash and wet wipes are useful.	
Fleece/Sweatshirt	1		Guide Book & map	
Warm hat, scarf and gloves	Woolly or fleece (winter)		Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissues	
Swim Wear	1		Ear Plugs	

\*\*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/ Visa		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Binoculars – optional	
Cash Cards/Visa		Walking poles (optional)	
Insurance Documents		Sweets and Snacks for the journey	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Water purifying tablets	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
		Small presents for local kids – biros, balloons, books, colouring books, pencils, bubbles	

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions**, please visit [www.baa.com](http://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.



### **Trip Report by Anthony Satin**

Anthony Satin of *The Sunday Times*, travelled with us to the Bougmez Valley in 2007 and writes:

By the time we wound up towards the M'Goun peak, late sun was bronzing the foothills of the Atlas. Below was a vision of such extraordinary calm and beauty that we stopped to stare: an enchanted valley hemmed in by precipitous mountains, its green floor embroidered with a broad, meandering thread of gold.

The happy valley an Arcadian landscape. A four-day walk up the valley and over the shoulder of M'Goun's lower slopes, rated as a medium challenge – there are some long walks, but no sheer climbs.

There are places where the notion of trekking with children is a nightmare, but Morocco shouldn't be one of them. No country I know is so well set up for family adventures. The secret lies in the simplicity of the arrangements – and the availability of mules.

In the mountains here, these beasts are the only viable way to carry loads, so the more remote you are, the easier it is to find four-legged transport. What's more, muleteers find lugging camping gear for walkers a good earner, and a break from the drudgery of carting supplies for locals. Our muleteers were especially happy, as we'd arranged for their mules to be lightly loaded so they could also carry tired children.

We spent the night in Agouti, the sort of village where nothing stirs between sundown and sunrise. Our gîte was basic but manageable. As in the old Toubkal days, we slept on mattresses on the floor.

Next morning, while the mules were loaded, we walked ahead along a track that followed the Ait Bougmez river. The valley was hemmed in by sheer rocks, but ascents were gentle and our trickiest challenge was to cross the river as it swung across the plain. Hopping over stepping stones kept the kids amused.

By mid-morning the sun had warmed the valley, and the younger children were beginning to tire. Right on cue, the mules caught up and the kids climbed on. There were no saddles, but our mattresses, laid over the mules' wicker baskets, made for a cushy ride, and the children's spirits revived as they moved ahead of us.

A couple of hours later, we found them throwing sticks into the river, the mules unloaded, mattresses spread, and the cook preparing a lunch of salads, eggs, tuna and bread. We were less than 48 hours from home, yet already in remote, mountainous Morocco. The landscape changed repeatedly during our walk that afternoon. At times, we clambered through narrow gorges with barely space for a path between the river and the rock walls that contained it. At others, we spread out across broad, green fields, beneath walnut and juniper trees.

As the sun dipped soft and low, we began a steep final pull up to Rougoult, a village with no gîte – so we camp. There's no camp site, either, so the tents are pitched in an idyllic, tree-trimmed spot near the river. Local kids came to watch, and the various children eyed each other - a large mess tent. It could rain at any time up here, and he knew from experience that nothing made foreign walkers more miserable than ending a long day with a damp dinner. After we'd eaten, he revealed the second neat touch, the "bathroom" – a small, man-sized tent with a toilet seat and a long drop.

There's something unexpectedly satisfying about walking up and out of the Ait Bougmez valley next day: the beauty, the wildness, the challenge of climbing long slopes on city legs. But I hadn't anticipated the fundamental joy you get from following a river through tight gorges, winding gullies and sharp ravines to its source – which in this case turned out to be on the lower slopes of Jebel M'Goun.

The source was a slit on a slope at about 9,000ft, from which water seeped down towards the valley. We reached it in time for lunch, to find our chef had got ahead of us and put up the mess tent to keep us warm – there was ice at this height. I couldn't resist putting my head down for a postlunch nap.

However grand the Ait Bougmez had been, the panorama beyond the pass, down the Tessaout valley, was even more dramatic – a vast, primordial landscape that looked as if it was still being formed. Such immensity, we all agreed, tends to put life, its problems and obsessions into perspective. We walked down towards the first village with a sensation of overwhelming joy.

The rogue colours in this world of blacks, beiges and greens were occasional clumps of irises and the multi-patterned clothes of the young girls who ran ahead to alert their families of our coming, or walked alongside holding our hands, beaming at this simple contact.

Guide interprets – not just the Berber language, but so much else: the region's geology, the properties of plants, the best way for our children to catch frogs, how corn is ground . . . and a thousand other differences in the life and thinking of the lucky people who live in the happy valleys that slope down towards what now seemed a more comfortable but much less extraordinary world.

On our final night, we shared a larger gîte with another group of foreigners, and had electricity for at least some of the evening. By then, the children were sufficiently familiar with their new environment to run around with the village kids. They came from different worlds,



shared no language in common, but that didn't stop them playing tag through the village, running between houses and leaping over rocks as though they'd lived there all their lives.

We had experienced four days of remarkable landscapes, of walking up one river and down another, of seeing no other trekkers. The M'Goun more than lives up to its reputation for being remote and rewarding, although the Moroccan government is encouraging visitors by improving the little-used road over the Atlas.