

## About the Country



### History

Morocco gained its independence in 1956, having been formerly divided between French and Spanish colonies. Spain retained claims over some areas however, most of which were returned to Morocco over the following decade. Morocco's first Head of State was Sultan Mohammed V, who changed his title to King. In July 1999, much to the shock and disappointment of the Moroccan people, Hassan II passed away unexpectedly and has been succeeded by his son, Mohammed VI.

### Geography

Morocco is situated on the western tip of North Africa, the north coast being on the Mediterranean and the west coast on the Atlantic. It lies very close to Europe, just a short ferry ride across the Straits of Gibraltar. The Atlas Mountain range forms the backbone of the country, from the fertile plains and sandy beaches on the Atlantic coast almost up to the Mediterranean in the north. To the west of the Atlas are fertile well-watered plains running down to the coast, whereas to the east a barren, rocky landscape merges into the true Sahara desert. With the coast, the mountains and the desert in such close proximity, the country enjoys a wide variety of topography.

### Climate

In general Morocco experiences hot, dry summers and mild winters. In Marrakech you can expect hot temperatures during the day and a warm evening climate. You must cross the High Atlas by road after your trek, which should provide clear views in good weather. Once on the eastern side of the High Atlas rain is infrequent and you can expect fine sunny weather during the trek, although you should be prepared for rain. Once high in the mountains, the temperature will be a lot cooler and you should expect cold temperatures at night.

### 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. In the Jebel Sahro the Ait Atta tribe have their own variation of the Berber language.

### The area you visit

Along with Fes and Meknes, Marrakech is one of the most fascinating cities in Morocco. The walled old city (the Medina) is crammed full of narrow streets, markets (souks), palaces and museums where only with a guide can one find the areas one is looking for. Outside the walls the 'new city' (Gueliz) offers the local residents and the tourists the full range of modern facilities - even a Pizza Hut! Your itinerary allows enough time to visit the old (and most interesting) part of town.

Just 50km to the south of Marrakech the Atlas Mountains rise up out of the plains to an altitude of 4165 metres at the summit of Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa. Seen as a clear, snowclad backdrop to the city in the winter months the mountains are usually obscured from view by the summer heat haze. Rocky ridges separated by steep 'V' shaped valleys spider outwards from the central point of Mt. Toubkal. The endemic Berbers of this region have terraced and irrigated the otherwise bare hillsides and built their tight packed villages entirely out of local materials to create some very aesthetic scenery. Winding and zigzagging mule tracks link the villages over high passes, and these form most of the trails on which you will walk.



## Purpose of the venture

The ethos of Schools Worldwide is "Education by Experience" and the intention of this trip is to provide you with a substantial and unique opportunity to experience a period of personal discovery in an alien environment and gain a valuable insight and appreciation of a new country and its culture.

As previously stated, this is no ordinary school trip. You will find the experience challenging at times, but in travelling as a group, you should consider the benefit of group support and teamwork, in order to successfully complete this itinerary as a unit and personally benefit from the overall experience.

You may already have your own ambitions for this trip, but if not, please take the time between now and departure to consider why you have joined the group, what you feel you can contribute and, importantly, what you want to get out of the experience.

## Proposed itinerary (outline)

**Important Note:** In order to meet the abilities and expectations of the team as a whole, this itinerary has been tailor-made and developed following a period of consultation with your school's Lead Teacher. It has been created in good faith, with up-to-date information available at the time of publishing. For reasons that may be out of our control, Schools Worldwide may need to make alterations to this itinerary in order that the running of in-country logistics and the safety of the team and individuals is considered at all times.

No	Day	Date	Travel From	Travel to (overnight)	Trekking (hrs / kms)	Accom	Meal Plan
1	Sun	06-Jul-08	UK	Marrakech	<>	Hotel	D
2	Mon	07-Jul-08	Marrakech	Oukaimeden	<>	Refuge	BLD
3	Tue	08-Jul-08	Oukaimeden	Tacchedirt	4 hours	Camp	BLD
4	Wed	09-Jul-08	Tacchedirt	Azib Likempt	6 - 7 hours	Camp	BLD
5	Thu	10-Jul-08	Azib Likempt	Azib Ouraine	4 hours	Camp	BLD
6	Fri	11-Jul-08	Azib Ouraine	Amsouzerte	3 - 4 hours	Camp	BLD
7	Sat	12-Jul-08	Amsouzerte	Amsouzerte	<>	Camp	BLD
8	Sun	13-Jul-08	Amsouzerte	Lac D'ifni	4 hours	Camp	BLD
9	Mon	14-Jul-08	Lac D'ifni	Toubkal Base	6 - 7 hours	Refuge	BLD
10	Tue	15-Jul-08	Toubkal Base	Aremd	7 - 9 hours	Mountain Hotel	BLD
11	Wed	16-Jul-08	Aremd	Marrakech	1 hour	Hotel	BLD
12	Thu	17-Jul-08	Marrakech	UK	<>	Flight	B



**Notes:** B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

**Included:** Flights and taxes, transfers by private vehicle, Schools Worldwide Group Leader, local Moroccan guide and trek support, ½ day Marrakech tour, meals as indicated above, accommodation as indicated above, equipment (excluding personal kit), Schools Worldwide kitbag, 1 x Satellite phone, comprehensive overseas expedition group First Aid Kit, full UK admin support.

**Extras:** Tips, drinks, personal spending, Schools Worldwide medical and personal travel insurance, travel to and from UK airport, personal equipment & kit (kit list provided in TIP2).



## What you can expect...



### Routine

On the trek, your cooking and camp chores are managed by your local Berber staff, although they will be in need of your assistance, so be prepared to help cook and clean with them! It is best to rise each day at first light and get stuck into your breakfast. After packing up, you'll set off on trek, leaving your muleteers to load their mules. You'll probably be on the move at about 7.30 or so, though much of this depends on what work needs to be done around camp.

You'll always be encouraged to walk slowly, allowing you to spend time learning about the flora and fauna and taking in the spectacular mountain views, it'll also be a good way of preserving your energy and acclimatising, remember...you're not in a race, so take the time to enjoy the scenery! By midday you'll be ready for your lunch. You'll sometimes carry this as a picnic to allow detours, but usually the mules carry it. The temperature can get hot during the midday hours, so lunch will probably be a couple of hours and is often the best time to wash yourself and your clothes. Depending on the morning's progress, it is normally a shorter walk in the afternoon before making camp, leaving plenty of time each evening for relaxation.

After your evening meal most of the teams are usually asleep by nine or ten o'clock, depending on the quality of the Berber entertainment! You'll find that your muleteers are a most happy bunch, and will often sing and dance until late into the night.

### Trekking conditions

Mornings are usually clear, and this fine weather can last throughout the day, but storms do sometimes build up during the afternoons. At the higher altitudes in the mountains you can expect to feel cold in the evenings. It will be generally be dry and stony underfoot, except after a storm and there may still be some snow on the high peaks, even in May!

### Trekking staff

The trek will be guided by a local guide who will speak Berber, good French and some English. His local knowledge and mountain experience will hopefully ensure that the tour runs to schedule! On the trek mules can carry all the baggage, muleteers will look after the mules and generally help out for the entire trek. A cook will organise the cooking and will appreciate help in the kitchen; this is a great opportunity to really get to learn more about the culture of the country, not only through conversation, but also through cuisine and you'll be quite impressed with what can be produced for a hungry team on a few gas stoves!

### Gifts and donations

Whether you are undertaking a project or embarking on a trek, there is little doubt that gifts are always well received by local communities. However, before departing for your trip, please consider the country you are going to and the use of the gifts that you would like to donate. You should also consider how you will carry your gifts, particularly those items which are bulky or weigh a lot (e.g books), and to whom you would specifically like your gifts to be of benefit (e.g children).

If you anticipate carrying a large amount of additional baggage as gifts, you must contact the airline prior to departure to ensure that you have an additional baggage allowance. Schools Worldwide cannot be responsible for arranging this on your behalf as your group are the named travellers. However, we will need to know how much extra baggage you will be taking, in case additional transport services are required in country, so please keep us informed.



## Gifts and donations (cont'd)

When choosing your gifts, please carefully consider what you will need to carry. Taking anything that you can flat pack will be much easier to transport than large, heavy items; frisbees and balloons are easy to pack, weigh very little, are great fun and provide masses of entertainment. Similarly, foam footballs are easy to pack and better than inflatable ones, as they don't burst!

Importantly, if you wish to give pens, paper, or books, please consider **WHO** you give them to. Providing the children with them directly is not necessarily as socially responsible as donating them to the head teacher or the head of the village for the benefit of the whole community. If you wish to donate such items, please ensure that you make a point of giving them to someone a) in a position of responsibility and b) in front of other locals so that you can be reassured that they will be used for the purposes you intend.

Finally, you should be very aware of how you are seen by locals and how they respond to you passing through their region. Though offering sweets and gifts throughout your journey can seem very generous and charitable, you should be aware of your responsibility to help prevent developing a begging culture, especially in rural communities.

## Fitness & Training

The trip you are embarking upon will be physically challenging at various points throughout the itinerary. Obviously the physical challenge will vary depending on the destination and the itinerary, however this has been tailored according to your team's ambitions.

### Introduction

The degree of your fitness will seriously contribute to your health, safety, enjoyment and overall success of your expedition, as a team and individually. It is an essential part of the preparations that you need to make for yourself prior to your departure.

You will be travelling to a foreign country where you will experience very different conditions in terrain and climate, compared to the UK, and where you will be exerting yourself physically and mentally, so you will need to be well prepared.

You should undertake a fitness test in order to assess fitness levels within the team. The test will help you determine what steps you need to take to ensure that you will be able to achieve the trekking objectives.

### Why is fitness so important?

**Health & Safety:** Your safety is our No.1 priority and being fit will allow you to acclimatise quicker. If you are trekking above 3000metres, where effects of altitude can start to affect the body, you will need to have prepared well to deal with the different climate. A fit body is a healthy body, so if you do become ill, your body will be able fight the illness more effectively and recover quicker.

**Enjoy your surroundings:** Trekking into some of the most outstanding scenery the country has to offer, you will be continually surrounded by breathtaking landscapes; sights that you will never forget. Your guides will point out different flora and fauna along the route and teach you about the cultures and traditions of the land. You don't want to miss anything trekking with your head down, so being fit will help you get the very most from these experiences without the effort of having to struggle.

**Group dynamics:** You are embarking upon this trip as a team, so you will want to trek together as a group. It becomes very difficult to trek in a group that splinters as a result of varying degrees of fitness, not only can it cause frustration, but it can also be a safety issue. Trekking as a fit group will help to ensure that your team's objectives are met and the trip as a whole is a success.



## Getting Started

**Medical Advice:** It is very important that if you have any medical problems, you always seek advice from your GP before starting an exercise programme.

**Don't over do it:** Getting fit is a gradual process, where your body becomes stronger and fitter with time. It is important that your fitness programme is a realistic one that helps your physical abilities and is one you know you can keep to. Make sure you don't over exert yourself, you don't want to be so exhausted at the end of the first week, that you can't do anything in the second!

**Do something you enjoy:** If you currently play sport during the week, you will only need to do a couple more exercise sessions. Swimming and running are great ways to get fit, but do the one you do enjoy first to get your base fitness, then move to the one you don't like so much, when you are fitter.

**Team training:** It is important that the entire team are fit, not just a select few. Training as a team may help you stay motivated and training walks together are a good way of preparing for your trek.

**Trekking packs & boots:** It is very important that you become accustomed to walking with your pack, so try to incorporate walks into your exercise routine. Start with relatively short walks (<2hrs) with a light pack (10kg), then gradually make them longer, (<4hrs). When you do these walks make sure that you are wearing the walking boots you will be using abroad, it will be a great way to break them in.

**You still have plenty of time:** But don't delay much longer. You are not expected to go out and immediately start running marathons or become Olympic weight lifters, but now is the time to start focusing on your fitness in order to build it steadily.

## A few final words of advice

As we said earlier, if you have any medical problems, please seek advice from your GP before starting your fitness programme. Don't over do it at the start and try to incorporate activities you enjoy.

You may wish to consider carrying out a monthly or fortnightly 'bleep test', in consultation with PE staff at the school, to focus the team on fitness training.

Fitness training should continue up until departure. Even with a basic level of fitness you may still find conditions in-country challenging, especially taking into account factors such as difficult terrain, mild illness, climate and altitude.

## Conclusion

In our experience a few of the trips we run every year are jeopardised by a few individuals whose fitness is not sufficient for the proposed physical challenge contained within the itinerary, and who have not followed our fitness-training advice prior to departure.

Your physical preparation for this trip needs to be taken seriously. It is important that a good fitness level is gained and assessed prior to departure. You have our support and we have created this document to help you. Start now, take your time and get fit both individually and as a team. The benefits of your effort now, will provide you all with the a better chance of a safe and successful expedition once overseas.

Guidelines for a Fitness Exercise will be included in your next Tour Information Pack, TIP 2.

