

INNER SAHARA 'MEHAREE' DROMEDARY TREK TO MOROCCO'S ERG LIHOUDI



4DAYS/3NIGHTS OBTFD05

DAY 1: MARRAKECH - OUARZAZATE - ZAGORA - BOU ATTACHE. Departing from your hotel or riad in Marrakech by **06:45** at



the latest, we set off south in our 4x4 over the Glaoua Plain to cross the High Atlas Mountains via the fabulous Tizi n'Tichka Pass (2260m) -so hold on to your hats - to continue down alongside the Oued Ouarzazate through the ex-French Foreign Legion town of Ouarzazate and on for 100 miles through the delightful and dramatic Valley of the Oued Drâa until you arrive at the small, charming kasbah-like Hotel Fibule Du Drâa in the Amazrou Palmeraie of the oasis small town of Zagora, dominated by the tagine pot-dominated Jbel Zagora - an Arabised version of the name Caesar - where you will have your midday lunch, to then set off - around 2 in the afternoon in winter, 3pm in the summer (the dates in this region are amongst the finest you'll ever find) for our adventure of some 4 hours towards the south-west into a desert of many small dunes, interspersed with the black gravelly 'Reg' stretches and occasional tamarisk and acacia bushes, an area isolated enough to let your imagination take hold. As the air has heated up, the winds have risen to make the sand swirl about us, you'll notice that older dunes appear darker, for the iron in the sand has finally oxidised. Here, at Bou Attache some 20km from Zagora, the low range of the stark, mineral and fossil-rich Jbel Beni hills on the horizon, we have our camp for the night in a carpeted Berber tent and, after a welcoming traditional tea ceremony, we shall have our dinner of tagine - which, doubtless, you'll try your hand at preparing – fruit, bread, tea. The sunsets and sunrises in the rarefied air of our desert

can simply take your breath away, far more than the hot air has done, so far. This night may be spent in our nomadic tent or as you prefer out in the open air under an awesome canopy of the starlit heavens. **LD.**

DAY 2: BOU ATACCHE - DJENIA - OULILI. Awakening to the splendour of a Saharan sunrise, we tuck into our Berber breakfast of



tea, milk, 'sand' bread and cheeses whilst our dromedaries are being saddled for today's méharée deep into the southern 'Hamada'. After some 4 hours swaying across 'Reg' and continuing up and over small dunes, the occasional isolated acacia trees breaking the vast horizon, we reach the acacia woods at Djénia, where we'll stop for our field picnic near the foothills of the Jbel Bani. Once refreshed, we now cross the sun-and-sandblasted Hassi Djénia (the 'devil's bowl') and go up over the Tizi n'Djénia col (1095m). Once across, we enter into a picturesque stretch of small oases, passing between the hamlets of El Fha and Hassi Elagba El Beida, (the 'white slope in a bowl') to arrive after some 6 hours at our standard bivouac site in a oued at Oulili adjoining some vegetable fields of the Aït Isfoul Berber tribe. Whilst our evening meal is being prepared, glass or two of mint tea in hand, perhaps you'd like to bear in mind that this ride so far would only have taken 1½ hours by 4x4 - by the shortest route. But you now know what they would have missed! A simply fabulous sunset is upon us; a different panorama, but the same unforgettable spectacle of Nature showing off. **BLD.**

DAY 3: OULILI - OUZIT N'BRAHIM OU ALI - ERG LIHOUDI. Sunrise! Breakfast in an awesome vista in every direction of



brightening heavens and the changing colours of the sands as they chase the sun's elevation. Our dromedaries are being saddled up for today's venture; south we ride for some 3 hours towards the dunes at Ouzit n'Brahim Ou Ali, where we shall stop for our field picnic. Refreshed and noontday siesta over, we now set out for a further 3 hours towards the remote dunes of the Erg Lihouïdi where we have our Standard bivouac (with Optional Upgrade to Deluxe) and dinner for this the last night of our adventure. **BLD.**



Standard Berber tent



Optional Caudal tent at Erg Lihouïdi

DAY 4: ERG LIHOUDI - TAGOUNITE - AIT ISFOUL - TAMEGROUTE - ZAGORA - KSAR AIT BEN HADDOU - MARRAKECH.



Having witnessed an awesome sunset the night before, now is the hour for an even more startling sunrise before our Bedouin breakfast of mint tea, bread, jams and cheeses, after which, your ships of the desert saddled up, you'll somewhat reluctantly strike off back towards the north-east and relative civilisation for your almost 2 hour long dromedary 'méharée' covering some 12 miles of Hamada to arrive around 10:00 - and now only 50 Days To Timbuktu - to rejoin our 4x4 at Tagounite, some 11 miles north of M'Hamid which'll take right at the trailing edge of the Jbel Bani across the dunes of Ait Isfoul and through an oasis via the nearby ancient and remote Jewish kasbahs of Beni Hayoun and Beni Sbih. Back now onto the tarmac road at Tagounite and on to an unusual tightly-knitted grouping of ksours and still-inhabited underground kasbahs; this is the ancient village of Tamegroute, a seat of learning since the 11th century, with its Library of 13th century illuminated Koran scrolls written on gazelle hide, some works of Pythagoras and some original maps of Alexandria, together with some very early mathematics text books; a - voluntary - contribution to the upkeep of the Library is always appreciated. We continue our stroll through the alleyways of the underground kasbah to the ancient Pottery Co-Operative, where pottery being produced in the simplest of manners, in the simplest of kilns. If you have been to Fes, or have seen photographs of this Imperial City, here you'll see the famous green glaze associated with its tiled roofs, for the founders of the 17th century Abou Ben Naceur 'Naciri Brotherhood' in Tamegroute invited craftsmen and potters to this remote area with the intent to turn it into a thriving caravan hub city. Onwards now to the Fibule Du Drâa, perhaps to take a shower before continuing on our way back up north for some 14km off-road adventure in the Valley of 1000 Kasbahs and on to Ouarzazate in the Drâa ('Black') Valley to visit the remarkable UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Ksour of Ait Ben Haddou. Here we alight from our vehicle to visit these various still-inhabited stepped up kasbahs, one half plainly-built Jewish section, one half decorated Berber and so closely-knit that they appear to be but one complete building, backed up against the looming hills in a stretch of unforgiving Hamada. The thick, high, sheer, elaborately decorated pisé (rammed earth - adobe) walls, turreted, crenulated ramparts, balustrades and arched 'babs' are a sight not to be missed. Obviously, here Hollywood has shot many of its films, including, as everyone will tell you, "Laurence of Arabia". One of the more spectacular sights in the Atlas ranges, set upon a rock above the reed-and-rock strewn Assif, commanding the area for miles around, this Kasbah controlled the caravan route to Marrakech until the French blasted a road through the Tizi n'Tichka in the late 1920s. We'll stop for a light lunch here at the restaurant of the Riad Dar Mouna before continuing ever - further north over the Adrar n'Deren (High Atlas) range of mountains to your hotel or

riad in Marrakech from the deep south of the Kingdom of Morocco. **BL.**

OUR PRICES FOR THE STANDARD PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE: Transfer by air-conditioned 4x4 Marrakech - Zagora - Bou Attache & Tagounite - Zagora - Marrakech; experienced licensed bi-lingual driver; meals* and Berber nomad tented accommodation throughout (maximum 6 persons per tent sleeping on mattresses with pillow & blankets) as detailed; trained dromedary & cameleer; chemical toilet. Medical and Accident Insurance.

OUR PRICES FOR THE DELUXE VERSION AT ERG LIHOUDI WILL INCLUDE: Transfer by air-conditioned 4x4 Marrakech - Zagora - Bou Attache & Tagounite - Zagora - Marrakech; experienced licensed bi-lingual driver; meals* and Berber nomad tented accommodation (maximum 6 persons per tent sleeping mattresses, pillow & blankets). At Erg Lihouïdi – Berber Caudal tented, carpeted accommodation (maximum 4 persons per tent sleeping on beds with mattresses, sheets & optional blankets); chemical toilet; trained dromedary & drover; **Folklore music & dancing around camp fire**; lavabo, towels, lanterns and candles; dinner includes Moroccan salad or harira soup, kebabs or 'kefta*', Berber vegetable tagine, fruit, mint tea; 1 bottle of wine between 2 people, soda water served by waiters in traditional costume. Bar service. * Those vegetarians or vegans amongst us need to pre-advise at time of reservation. Medical and Accident Insurance.

OUR PRICES WILL NOT INCLUDE: Accommodation pre & post, nor transfers from/to Marrakech's airport. Gratuity to driver, camp headman and cameleer. Any expenditure of a personal nature, nor anything not specifically mentioned in the itinerary.

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IT IS RECOMMENDED YOU BRING WITH YOU: Rucksack, day pack; trainers or sandals; long trousers and sweater; windcheater (seasonal), broad-brimmed hat (or you may purchase a 'Chèche' before you set out from Zagora), change of walking socks; lip balm; personal toiletries and towel; hygienic 'Wipes'; small First Aid kit; torch with batteries (non-essential); filled water bottle; water purification drops - usually iodine; sunscreen, sunglasses; penknife - do not pack in hand baggage for flights; nibbles and/or dried fruit. Drinking chocolate if preferred. Camera, film and plastic bags for lenses; extra toilet rolls could come in handy! For those who wear contact lenses, perhaps it would be a good idea to bring along a spare pair of glasses.

