

THE MOROCCAN TOUBKAL MASSIF RANGE

Escape the *heat*

NICE 'N EASY PRIVATE ONE DAY ANY DAY EXCURSIONS FROM MARRAKECH.

THE JBEL TOUBKAL & SISTER PEAKS IN THE UPPER VALLEYS

OBTRAK10 9 hours

MARRAKECH - IMLIL - AROUND - SIDI CHAMHAROUCH - IMLIL - MARRAKECH: Departure by car from Marrakech around 9 in



the morning for an exhilarating almost 2 hour drive south across the Haouz Plain with its olive-groves and citrus-tree orchards, to the Berber town of **Imlil** (1740m), known as Morocco's 'Little Chamonix', set in the upper level foothills of the Western High Atlas mountains, a main trailhead with streams and paths branching out in all directions. As we start to ascend into the High Atlas Valleys, we pass through the Berber town of Tahanaoute to the first Berber village in this region of the High Atlas Mountains - Azrou, meaning "rock" where you'll find it hard to spot the mosque, a somewhat strange phenomenon before winding our way up past the Moulay Brahim Gorges and into the high valleys - so hold on to your hats. We shall pass under the little town of Zaouiat Moulay Brahim perched on a cliff overlooking the oued (river) to proceed past small, riverside irrigated plots, some of which are centuries old where you may see the hardy Berber women and men tilling their soil before we reach the market town of Asni at the crossroads of the Ait Mizene and Assif Ammassine Valleys. We may make a short stop here as you soak up the hustle and bustle before turning into the Ait Mizene Valley towards the mountains of the Toubkal National Park you now see before you. On the now narrow valley road we wind our way up past the villages of Imi Ourghlad, Tinifine, Aguerssiouâl and Taddart whose pisé (adobe) homes and plots of land have been clawed from the mountain slopes to pass by Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot perched on a cliff until we reach Imlil (meaning "white"). Here we shall leave our vehicle to take a welcome glass of mint tea in our Gîte d'étape prior to setting out on the back of a mule for some 4 km ever south to the Berber village of Aroumd (Aremd) (1843m), passing the hamlets of Taourirt, Targa, and Imoula, up and down the stark slopes, the jagged Western High Atlas peaks of the Toubkal Massif before us - Jbels Aguelzim (3547m), Aksouâl (3847m) and the Adrar Adj (3122m) watching us all the way. We shall stop at Aroumd to visit this rather singular village in the Assif Ait Mizane Valley, built seemingly house upon house on a large moraine spur, overlooking ancient irrigated terraced fields of barley, corn and vegetables and always surrounded by almond and walnut trees. We thence carry on for another 8 km to the equally-quaint Berber hamlet of Sidi Chamharouch set beside a small waterfall and stream, again with its pisé homes seemingly built somewhat chaotically one into another. This village is a place of pilgrimage for devout Moslems and it is where there is a marabout shrine - forbidden to non-Moslems - said to be a relic of a pre-Islamic religious and naturalist cult. We take a break for a picnic, within full view of **Jbel Toubkal**, at 4167m the highest peak in the Maghreb, prior to setting off back down the other side of the valley back to Imlil by 4 o'clock at the latest and our return trip to Marrakech. Perhaps you'd like to experience the therapeutic joys of the local hammam for delicious relaxation and a scrub down in this Turkish bath atmosphere? You have but to ask your guide. **L.**



OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE: Private transportation Marrakech - Imlil - Marrakech. An experienced licensed bi-lingual mountain guide throughout. A ride on a mule to close to the highest peak in North Africa. Bottled or gaseous water en-route. A field picnic lunch. Field picnic lunch - fresh Moroccan salad, cheese, tinned tuna fish*, mint tea, bread, fruit. *If **vegetarian or vegan** please pre-advise. Medical and Accident Insurance.

OUR PRICES WILL NOT INCLUDE: *Accommodation pre & post, nor transfers from/to Marrakech's' airport.* Gratuities to chauffeur, guide and muleteer. 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: Good trainers, long trousers; hat, sunscreen, sunglasses; hygienic 'wipes'; day pack 'bum bag', insect repellent, camera and possibly some biros and sweets for the local mountain Berber children.