

# THE MOROCCAN MIDDLE ATLAS VALLEYS AND RANGES

## MOUNTAIN, COUNTRY AND VALLEY HIKES

### NICE 'N EASY PRIVATE ONE DAY ANY DAY HIKES FROM FES



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:- GRADE ONE WALKING MOSTLY ON TRACKS AT LOWER LEVELS, SOMETIMES ROCKY, OFTEN FLAT, FOR FROM 3- 6 HOURS EACH DAY. GOOD TRAINERS WOULD DO, BUT TAKE BOOTS IF YOU ARE USED TO THEM. FOR ANYONE WHO LEADS A REASONABLY ACTIVE LIFE. HIKING ALWAYS INVOLVES SOME EFFORT. HIKING ALWAYS INVOLVES SOME EFFORT. CLEARLY THERE ARE MANY DIFFERING FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE DIFFICULTY OF A PARTICULAR HIKE, INCLUDING LENGTH OF DAY, TERRAIN, ALTITUDE AND WEATHER CONDITIONS. SINCE THESE FACTORS ARE NECESSARILY VARIABLE, ANY SYSTEM OF GRADES CAN ONLY PROVIDE A GENERAL INDICATION. WE HAVE TRIED TO MAKE OUR SYSTEM AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE, BUT IT CANNOT ACCOUNT FOR PERSONAL ABILITIES OR EXPERIENCE.

## REMOTE HAMLETS IN THE CEDAR FOREST ECOSYSTEM

**OBTFES07 5 HOURS' HIKING.** Departure from Fes at around 9 in the morning for an exciting 2 hours' drive towards the south to



the most remote and beautiful country in the foothills of the Middle Atlas. After some 30 minutes, we pass by the Kandar Massif (1768m) to arrive at the small 1920s French-built hill station of Immouzèr Du Kandar (1220m), perched on the limestone edge of the Saïss Plateau. Translated from the Berber language, Immouzèr Du Kandar means 'Cultivated Valley', and is also taken from the name of a holy man who has a shrine (marabout) built in his memory. We pass by the ruined kasbah of the Aït Seghrouchen, a little medina and few remaining, yet still-inhabited, troglodyte homes to turn off onto a secondary road through to the village of Aïn Leuh (The Spring in the Woods), an old Souq of the Beni M'Guild Berber tribe located in a ravine some 95kms south of Fes, having driven along a winding road through rolling hillsides to see storks nesting on nearby rooftops. We carry on up to the crest, with its rich stands of towering cedar, past the old saw-mill of Ajaabou to the bouldered Valley of Tisfoula, where we'll come across some mysteriously mushroom-shaped rock formations. From here, at some 1700m we start our winding downhill walk past the Royal Park of Kissarite, which King Hassan II had made into his private boar-hunting preserve. This secluded part of the Atlas Mountains was relatively undisturbed by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century French settlers, given the warlike nature of the mountain Oumlahou Berber, so the old balance between rough pasture and silent forest remains virtually intact. We stroll through silent stands of ancient cedar, tall juniper, pine, holm and cork oak to the muted sounds of the Levaillant woodpecker and ever-present bulbul to emerge from this important ecosystem into fields near the summit of Jbel El Kissarite (2008m) to re-enter the forest of juniper, thurifer spruce, larch, cedar and pine. We shall stop en-route for our field picnic in a shaded glade before continuing our easy walk on down to the sounds of the waters of the Oued Ifrane, past stands of strawberry tree, box-tree and holly and, in season, the large variety of seasonal orchids, peony and carpets of violets, thyme clumps and sawgrass. We may just surprise small troops of Barbary Apes sitting in the clearings, feeding off the bark or foraging for insect-life. Passing alongside the Jbel Tizmourine we traverse stands of black and white poplars, clumps of pink laurel and pine down to the pisé homes of the hamlet at Zaouiat d'Ifrane (1224m), overshadowed by stark limestone cliffs ('Sellou') and waterfalls, here perhaps to take a welcome glass or two of mint tea in a Berber family's home. These cliffs at Zaouiat d'Ifrane were once used as agadirs (fortified granaries) wherein were stored the precious harvests of corn and barley, together with the few personal possessions of the individual families, to be hidden from the marauding plains Berber. When ready, around 5 in the evening, we get back on our transportation for our trip back to the most ancient of the Imperial Cities.



**OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE:** Private round trip transportation Fes - Tisfoula Valley/Zaouiat d'Ifrane - Fes. An experienced licensed bi-lingual mountain guide throughout. Light field picnic lunch. **FIELD PICNIC LUNCH:** consisting normally of fresh Moroccan salad, cheese, tuna fish \*, fruit, bread, mint tea. \* If **vegetarian or vegan** please pre-advise. Medical and Accident Insurance.

**OUR PRICES WILL NOT INCLUDE:** *Accommodation pre & post, nor transfers from/to Fes' airport.* Gratuity to guide and chauffeur. Any expenditure of a personal nature. Bottled or gaseous water, nor anything not specifically mentioned in the itinerary.

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**IT IS RECOMMENDED YOU BRING WITH YOU:** Walking boots or good high trainers; hat, anorak or windcheater (seasonal); sunscreen, sunglasses; binoculars, cameras and nibbles; hygienic 'wipes.' Filled water bottle.

Please, ladies, this is a Muslim country, so **NO** shorty shorts

