

# THE MOROCCAN HIGH ATLAS RANGES

## MOUNTAIN COUNTRY AND VALLEY HIKE

### ANY DAY DEPARTURES

The Ighil M'Goun summit is second only in height to Jbel Toubkal, the highest peak in the Maghreb, yet can be hiked up **all year round**. The remote and beautiful Ait Bou Guemès Valley gives hill walkers and ramblers a long but easy hike through spectacular gorges, isolated Berber hamlets and mountain streams towards a non-technical ascent of this sacred snow-covered summit.



## M'GOUN'S GORGES, WILDERNESS AND AÏT BOU GUEMES VALLEYS

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:-GRADE ONE TO THREE



BETWEEN EASY AND STRENUOUS AT A STEADY PACE OF 1Km AN HOUR; GOOD BOOTS ESSENTIAL. YOU NEED TO BE REASONABLY CONFIDENT OF YOUR FITNESS AND ENDURANCE LEVELS, PREFERABLY HAVING HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF HIKING OR HILL WALKING AT ALTITUDE AND VARIATIONS OF CLIMATE. FULL SUPPORT TEAM. 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.

### 7DAYS/6NIGHTS OBTIM01m

**DAY 1: MARRAKECH - AZILAL - AÏT MEHAMMED - TIZI N'AÏT ABBES - AGOUTI.** Departure from your hotel around **10** in the

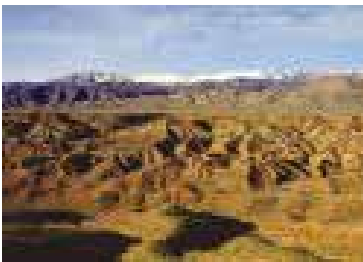


morning for a really pleasant drive towards the northeast through part of an extensive palmeraie, then between the rocky, sparsely-populated foothills of the Western High Atlas mountains and the more verdant Middle Atlas range to the crenulated pisé-walled market town of Demnate, with its kasbah and ancient Mellah - or Jewish Quarter - and massed olive groves. From here we follow the winding road up past a scattered hill-top collection of agadirs (ancient silos) set amidst the almond trees and irrigated fields of Ait Taguella. It has taken us some 3 hours to get here and we alight from our vehicle to stretch our limbs for a walk up through stands of olive and fig trees whilst our field picnic is being later to continue our drive to the Middle Atlas village of Azilal (1360m). We now turn to the south through the Tizi n'Aghbar into the western reaches of the hidden, isolated valley of Ait Bou Guemès, Morocco's "Happy Valley." Stark mountain slopes have given way to terraced irrigated fields of barley, potato and corn, shaded pastures watered by mountain streams, orchards of apple, peach and cherry, all overlooked by interlinked pisé hamlets of the Ait Isha Berber people. Arriving at the village of Ait Mehammad we now approach the Jbel Azourki (3690m) to turn, at Ait Abbès, towards the south-west down to the village of Agouti (1800m), where we shall leave our vehicle at around 14:00 for an easy hike to the hamlet of Tamalout Ait N'Ziri for our overnight accommodation in a Berber Gîte d'étape. Time to walk around this Berber hamlet before our evening dinner and to rest up for the next few days' adventure into the M'Goun wilderness.

**LD.**



**DAY 2: AGOUTI - AÏT SAÏD - AROUSS - AAZIB IKISS:** After breakfast we set off around **9** o'clock with our mule team to join a



narrow piste leading south into the Assif n'Arouss Valley and a seasonally slow moving stream for about an hour before the trail zigzags into the hamlet of Ait Saïd. From here you will see the mighty M'Goun summit, the furthest peak to the south. Continuing out of the hamlet, leaving the shade of the trees, we follow a path to a gentle stream some fifteen minutes further on. Moments later we enter another small hamlet called Arouss which is not marked on any map. Our path now leads into a narrow valley after fording the stream in the hamlet. Again the trail leads south onto a wide, rolling plain, which gives a real sense of scale of the M'Goun Massif. We reach the Âazib n'lkiss, here to picnic in front of some troglodyte homes to continue on to camp further on by at around **3pm** and, whilst our bivvy is being set up on flat ground at the Âazib Ikiss and our evening meal is prepared, there's time to take in the

breathhtaking panorama of the M'Goun summit and explore the Arouss Gorge. **BLD.**



**DAY 3: AAZIB IKISS - TIZI N'OUMSKIYQ – TIZI n'AGHOUIRI - TARKEDDID PLATEAU:** **9am** breakfast, bivvy packed we're



off now in a south-westerly direction hugging the western bank of the valley. The trail is at times hard to distinguish, but the route is obvious and the terrain, though rocky, is not too difficult. Our trail is steadily ascending to become quite steep until, about 40 minutes later, this valley meets another leading towards the west. Our path through a valley now thickly coated with juniper bushes starts to zigzag steeply to a col – Tizi n'Oumskiyq (2909m) - field picnic en-route - after which it continues to climb towards the south. As our trail gets closer to the Tizi n'Aghououiri (3400m) it becomes quite steep. After crossing this col we have in fact traversed the Jbel Tarkeddid which faces the Irhil M'Goun. Our path now descends towards the Plateau in tight zigzags in a generally south-south-westerly direction – watch your footing – to see a deep gorge before us. The path continues to zigzag downwards over loose rocks for about an

hour before levelling out onto this Plateau. We shall walk across the flat, fertile plateau until we reach our bivouac site at 2800m after some 6 hours' steady hiking for the night and a welcome dinner amidst some awesome surroundings. The late afternoon can be spent exploring the Gorge of Tessaout. **BLD.**



**DAY 4: TARKEDDID PLATEAU - IRHIL M'GOUN SUMMIT - OULILIMT. 5am** breakfast as even on a perfect summer's morning



of calm weather and sunshine the weather could turn bad immediately after noon. Your experienced mountain guide will take the decision before setting out up to an almost obscured Tizi n'Oumsoud (2969m), offering us wonderful views of the wide Tinougrine Valley. Another 25 minutes takes us to a brow which marks the start of a steep-sided ridge. We shall follow the top of this ridge around the rim of a massive crater - take care: the ridge is narrow and there's always some wind about. The M'Goun summit is clearly visible as the ridge levels out, with magnificent views of the Anti-Atlas and M'Goun Valley, of Qlâa't des M'Gouna and of the distant fertile Aït Bou Guemès Valley. We follow the ridge for a further 20 minutes when we start a 20-minute climb to another brow. The ridge continues and the summit is still clearly visible. This stretch is not for the faint-hearted, but is simply a must for serious hikers. Just 20 minutes more along it we come to a final steep section of ascent to

the summit (**4068m/13,343ft**), the second highest peak in North Africa, the fourth highest in all of Africa, after Jbel Toubkal, Mounts Kilimanjaro and Kenya. What better spot for a picnic? Down now to the valley floor and a calm section of flat-bottomed valley with a stream. Our trail leads us out through a narrow corridor to the broad valley floor of the Assif Oulilimt. A further 35 minutes takes us to a point at which the valley suddenly becomes very narrow, almost closing. Before this lies a wide, soft area of meadow at the centre of which springs a water-source. It is here, at around **5pm**, where we set up camp for the night and our welcome dinner.

**BLD.**



**DAY 5: OULILIMT - AÏN AFLAFAL - TEGHRAMT N'AÏT AHMED: 8am** breakfast, before setting out on a short, again attractive,



easy stage as it follows the Oulilimt Valley. We trek uphill from the valley floor for some 20 minutes to go down for a further 20 minutes to cross the wide valley with some weird vertical rock formations and up to a low col. Down now for a further 15 minutes in zigzags to yet another stream and on to explore a series of relatively isolated Berber hamlets. Berber hospitality being what it is, you'll probably be invited to share mint tea along the way. Following the Oulilimt River which has carved a route through the dominant valley - you should bring sandals or trainers to follow the path through the waters - we arrive at the Refuge Aïn Aflafal (2105m) for our field picnic, also a good place to replenish water bottles. We continue on for a small distance to arrive, around 3pm, at Teghramt N'Aït Ahmed (2235m), a bizarre, organic- looking dwelling which appears to have grown out of the floodplain. It is around this giant sandcastle, once a stopping place for the north-south camel

caravans, where we set up our bivvy site for the night. There's even a small "shop" nearby where an enterprising Berber will sell you a Coke or two before settling down to our evening's meal. **BLD.**



**DAY 6: TEGHRAMT N'AÏT AHMED - TIZI N'AÏT IMI - AÏT IMI - TABANT. 8am** breakfast to set out on this varied stage which



includes a steep ascent and a long descent into the Aït Bou Guemès Valley. We turn to the north-west into a smaller valley where the trail leads west. The col towards which we are heading, Tizi n'Aït Imi, is clearly visible. Some 40 minutes hiking takes us to the Âzib Tighratine, where our trail splits. We head north-north-west up a gentle incline along the north side of the valley. The trail begins to meander more towards the north-west as it begins to zigzag more steeply up to the col where the path divides. When we finally reach Tizi n'Aït Imi (2905m) we shall see from this height both the M'Goun and Aït Bou Guemès Valleys. The views here are exceptional to clearly illustrate the fertile Aït Bou Guemès and the raw M'Goun. We can make out Tabant, our goal, on a clear day. Our descent is steep and over loose scree until we reach a small reservoir some 90 minutes later. From here we head north-west towards the bright, fertile valley floor on which Tabant sits. Some 35 minutes takes us to the hamlet of Aït Imi (1900m). Here we shall picnic by a water-source, thence on to the cultivated fields of the Aït Bou Guemès valley, passing through the ancient hamlet of R'Bat to reach, after a total of 7 hours' hiking, the village of Tabant (1850m), one of the more appealing trailheads in the Atlas Mountains, and our accommodation in a Berber house and our evening meal. **BLD.**



**DAY 7: TABANT - AGOUTI - CASCADES D'OUZZOUD - MARRAKECH.** Breakfast at **8am** to set off now in our vehicle back to Marrakech, passing through Agouti, Azilal and on through to Aït Taguella where we turn up



to the verdant natural site of the renowned Cascades d'Ouzzoud. It has taken us some 2 hours to get here and we alight from our vehicle to stretch our limbs for a walk down through stands of olive and fig trees to the waterfall and small lake. We shall picnic in this area. The falls consist of several streams that crash 100m into a pool, causing a shifting rainbow and, with any luck, we'll get to see troops of the Barbary Ape on the lakeshore before we climb up back to the top to rejoin our vehicle an hour later to continue our drive on to Marrakech, arriving there at around **3:30** at the end of a particularly exciting adventure into the contrasting valleys, gorges, mountains and tribal villages of the Irhil M'Goun. **BL.**



**OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE:** Private round trip transportation from your hotel or riad in Marrakech to trailheads and return to the hotel or riad or airport in Marrakech. An experienced English-speaking licensed mountain guide throughout. **4** nights' accommodation in bivouac, **1** in a Gîte d'étape; **1** in a Berber House: igloo tents and undermats; mules and support team. Meals as outlined in the itinerary. All meals and accommodation as detailed. Medical and Accident Insurance. Clients are always requested to check their own personal travel insurance to see if any adrenaline activities are precluded.

**OUR PRICES WILL NOT INCLUDE:** Accommodation pre & post, nor transfers from/to Marrakech's' airport. Gratuities to guide/cook/muleteers. Personal gear. 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:** Stout mountain walking boots (which can take crampons between mid-November & mid-March); change of socks, sleeping bag (3-4 seasons); rucksack, windcheater or duvet jacket (seasonal); lip balm; LED head lamp or torch with batteries (optional); earmuffs, ski cap or balaclava, slickers, thermal underwear, gloves (all seasonal Nov-Apr); filled water bottle (bottled water or water purification drops - usually iodine); rambler pole(s); penknife - do not pack in hand baggage for flights; personal toiletries and towels; hygienic 'Wipes'; insect repellent; sunscreen, nibbles (muesli or dried fruit) drinking chocolate if preferred. Extra toilet rolls and a trowel would come in quite handy.

N.B: Meals during the hike are normally:-

Breakfast - mint tea, coffee, chocolate powder, milk, bread, butter, jam, cheese, cereals.

Picnic lunch - fresh Moroccan salad, cheese, tinned tuna fish\*, mint tea, bread.

Dinner - Tagine (chicken or mutton\*), couscous or spaghetti rotated according to the duration of the trek; bread, coffee, mint tea, cake, fruit. \* **Those vegetarians or vegans** amongst us need to pre-advise at time of reservation.

