EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Winter Toubkal Trek (JT 2014)

WALK & TREK

TOUR DURATION **8** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Basic
Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Challenging to Tough
Tour Code: JT

Tour Highlights - Winter Toubkal Trek

- ✓ Winter Trekking - An exhilarating trek among snow-capped peaks and the stunning landcape of the Atlas Mountains.
- ✓ Jebel Toukbal - Ascend to the summit of the highest peak in North Africa (4167m).
- ✓ Berber Villages - Discover remote villages and meet the hospitable local people.
- ✓ Marrakech - A chance to explore Morocco's captivating Red City.

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	2 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Basic Village House 3 nights Basic Mountain Shelter
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Marrakech
End Point:	Tour ends: Marrakech
Maximum Altitude on Trek (m):	4167
Transport:	Minibus
Countries:	Morocco

Winter Toubkal

With the snow-capped peaks of Morocco's High Atlas Mountains providing an impressive backdrop, we climb to the summit of North Africa's highest peak, Jebel Toubkal (4167m). On a clear day we enjoy views from the summit across the Atlas range and over the Sahara Desert. We also explore the souks and medina of the bustling city of Marrakech.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Basic

Our basic accommodation can offer the most rewarding and memorable places to stay. These are usually communal or camping style with shared facilities. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable and overall comfort levels are basic.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

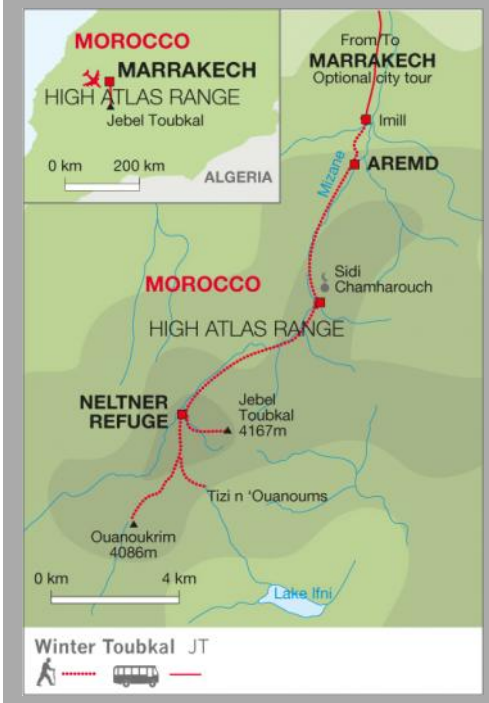
DAY 1 Join tour Marrakech

Join your tour in Marrakech. The city is the spiritual heart of Morocco, the cultural melting pot of the mountain Berbers and the desert peoples of the south, whose eclectic mix of ideals and traditions has resulted in a fascinating clash of colour, noise and visual delights that is straight out of the Arabian Nights. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you may be able to start exploring the souks of the Red City independently before meeting your group and Tour Leader at the hotel.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Drive to Imlil and trek to Aremd (2000m)

After most of the morning free in Marrakech, we leave the city behind and drive south towards the craggy peaks and plunging valleys of the Toubkal Massif. Crossing the Haouz Plain we pass through the tiny town of Asni, from where our road begins to climb towards the foothills of the Massif. Below us the valley of the Oued Rhirhaia stretches out into the distance and small villages cling to the sides of the steep hills as we meander our way towards the village of Imlil. Here we leave



our vehicle and, in the company of our mountain guide, head along the Mizane Valley towards the Berber village of Aremd (2000m). Built on a moraine spur overlooking the valley floor, Aremd is the largest village in the valley and provides an interesting mix of traditional terraced farming, gites and streets that seem to be permanently gridlocked by goats and cattle. For generations the local Berber villagers have worked these lands, producing corn, potatoes and walnuts from the harsh landscape and we will have a chance to explore something of the village en route to our overnight accommodation, stopping for a refreshing mint tea along the way. Please be aware that our village accommodation will be basic, with shared facilities and dormitory style rooms.Total walking time: approx 1 hour.

Overnight: **Basic Village House**

DAY 3 Trek to Neltner Refuge (3207m) via Sidi Chamharouch

This morning we meet up with our mules and muleteers for the continuing journey through the mountains. Heading east and crossing the flood plain, our route takes us along mule tracks and up into the high rocky cliffs above the valley. Crossing the river we eventually come to the pastoral shrine of Sidi Chamharouch (2340m), which attracts tourists and pilgrims alike (although only Muslims are allowed to cross the stone bridge to visit the marabout shrine itself). The village sits besides a small waterfall and presents a jumbled cluster of houses that seem to melt together into a chaotic mass along the valley walls. Continuing up into the snow-line it will take us another 5 hours to reach the refuge. After a chance to rest we'll then do another equipment check, practising on the surrounding snow covered slopes and receiving some basic instruction on the use of crampons and ice axes from our mountain guide. Total walking time: approx 5 hours

Overnight: **Basic Mountain Shelter**

DAY 4 Ascend Jebel Toubkal (4167m)

If conditions are right this morning we will make our first attempt on the summit of Jebel Toukbal, North Africa's highest mountain. It will be an early start, a long day and a steep climb, as we make our way up a meandering track of snow and scree to our first stopping point at 3700m. From here we turn left, following the slope up to the South Col of Tizi n' Toukbal (3975m), from where we follow the snowy ridge to the summit. Depending upon snow conditions, the journey to the top should take us around 4 hours and once we hit the summit the views that greet us are simply breathtaking. On a clear day you can see the entire Toukbal range, right down to the plains of Haouz surrounding Marrakech. To the north lie the white giants of the High Atlas and to the south, the Anti Atlas and the Sahara. Pliny, the great Roman scholar, once described the High Atlas Mountains as the most fabulous mountains in all of Africa and from our vantage point high above the valley it is easy to understand why. Descending to the Neltner Refuge from here, the journey back should take us around 2.5 hours, where a late lunch will be waiting for us.Total walking time: approx 6.5 hours Overnight refuge.

Overnight: **Basic Mountain Shelter**

DAY 5 Ascent of Mount Ouanoukrim (4086m)

Assuming conditions yesterday were right for the ascent of Jebel Toukbal, this morning you may like to attempt the nearby peak of Ouanoukrim, a more demanding climb than Toubkal with some steep, exposed sections of rock and snow. Departing the lodge early, we follow a gradually climbing path that takes us towards Tizi n'Ouanoums and then on to Tizi n'Ouagane (3750m). Chances are we will encounter snow for much of the journey and, as we begin the ascent to the top from Tizi n'Ouagane, we will have to negotiate a rocky track that may require some scrambling. Once past this section though, the route to the top then continues along a steadily climbing slope of snow and scree to the summit, from where we are rewarded with more spectacular views across the Anti Atlas and the Sahara. Enjoying a picnic lunch en route, the entire journey should take us around 8 hours, depending on conditions.Total walking time: approx 8 hours

Overnight: **Basic Mountain Shelter**

DAY 6 AM trek to Tizi Ouanoums Pass (3650m), then descend to Aremd via Neltner

This morning we follow the same initial route as for Ouanoukrim before turning left up a steep gorge to Tizi Ouanoums, a viewpoint affording stunning views down towards the still waters of Lac D'ifni. The total journey should take us around 3 hours, returning to Neltner for lunch. Afterwards we turn our back on the mountain for the last time and head back down to Aremd, arriving in the village late this afternoon. Depending on our arrival time, there may be time for an optional visit to the local hammam.Total walking time: approx 8 hours

Overnight: **Basic Village House**

DAY 7 Trek to Imlil. Drive back to Marrakech

Trekking back to Imlil this morning we rejoin our vehicles and drive back to Marrakech, where on arrival the rest of the day is free to explore the city's colourful souks and its celebrated Djemma El Fna Square. A feast for the senses, the area is a chaotic confusion of noise and colour, where you will find the streets alive with storytellers and letter-writers, musicians, jugglers and water-sellers. Marrakech is divided into two distinct parts, the Gueliz (or modern French-built city) and the Medina (the Old City) and there is the option to take an afternoon walking tour around the souks with a local guide, visiting the museum and the elegant Koutoubia mosque and tower, reputed to be the most perfect Islamic monument in North Africa. Alternatively you may prefer to spend your final afternoon independently exploring this maze of narrow streets, enjoying the sounds, colours and smells of the exotic and perhaps haggling for some last minute presents. Or perhaps you'll prefer just sitting in a local café and watching the street tableaux unfold before you.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 Tour ends Marrakech

The tour ends today in Marrakech. Depending on the schedule of your flights you may wish to spend some additional time wandering in the market and buying your last souvenirs before departure.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Morocco is a developing country and as such, the accommodation standards are not equivalent to those in Europe and can be more basic. We generally choose our properties because of their location, cleanliness, traditional style or for their welcoming atmosphere, as we endeavour to provide an authentic Moroccan experience. However, some of the properties might have some outdated or simple furniture and the level of service may vary depending on the location. You may find that availability of hot water is variable or limited in certain locations. Breakfasts are generally continental style. A swimming pool is often available, especially in the cities.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches,5 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

AREMD Local hammam approx. £4

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly, you should allow approx. £25 for tipping of crew and local guides used.

Foreign Exchange

Morocco

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in main towns/cities, though can be unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance: Not all places.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques are difficult to exchange and are not recommended.

Local Currency: Moroccan Dirham (MAD).

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollars, Sterling and Euros are readily exchangeable. We recommend you take a mixture of cash and credit cards. Scottish bank notes and Australian dollar travellers cheques and cash are NOT normally accepted in Morocco.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

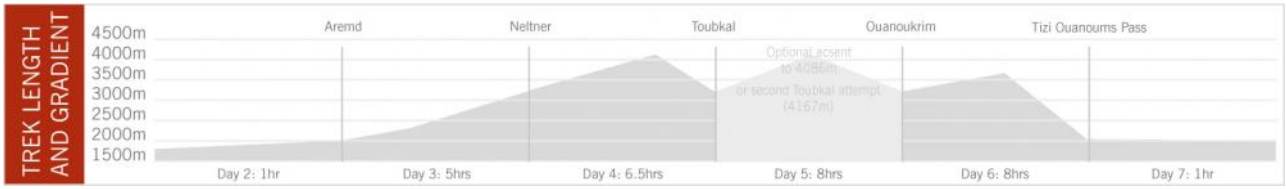
Morocco: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Morocco

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

Preparing for your Tour



Trekking Details

This is a 4-day trek with an average of 6 to 8 hours walking each day. It is recommended that you know how to use ice axe and crampons. We reach a maximum altitude of 4167m and have graded this trip as challenging to tough.

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

4167

Climate

Morocco

The climate is both Mediterranean and Atlantic. The dry, hot season is from May to October when summer temperatures can reach 38°C and above (we will vary our sight seeing times as best we can to avoid the heat during this period). Temperatures may drop significantly at times during the night as the day's heat rapidly diminishes. From December to January snow can be expected on mountain passes and it can be wet. In winter, day temperatures will probably be around 18-25°C, dropping to perhaps 0-5°C.

Clothing

Morocco is a Muslim country and it is important to dress with respect for local customs. People may be offended by shorts or revealing dresses, which can attract unwelcome attention. We advise that in general both men and women should cover shoulders, upper arms and knees. Transparent, plunging necklines and tightfitting clothes should be avoided. Women should also cover their heads when entering a sanctuary, though in general, mosques are forbidden to non-Muslims. For those clients on a cycling holiday please bear this information in mind for times that you are not on the bikes. While cycling it is no problem for both men and women to wear your regular cycling gear, tight fitting or not.

Equipment

Ice axe (non-technical winter trekking axe with long handle); 3/4-season sleeping bag; warm jacket (ideally down jacket); warm trousers; wind and waterproof jackets and trousers; warm midlayer; warm hat and face protection (balaclava); warm and waterproof gloves/mittens; thermal underwear; sunglasses and ski goggles; high factor sunscreen and lip protection; head torch and spare batteries; water bottle (minimum 1litre); insulated bottle; washcloth/small towel; wet wipes; toilet paper; anti-bacterial handwash; plastic bags; personal first aid kit.
Please note that an ice axe and crampons can be hired locally for MAD300 (approx. £20) each for the duration of the trip. Please consult your Tour Leader on arrival.

Footwear

Strong and waterproof mountain trekking boots with stiff sole; crampons; inner socks and thick socks (ski type); spare boot laces; gaiters; trainers for mountain hut.

Luggage: On Tour

We suggest that you bring a soft, waterproofed holdall/barrel bag that will be carried by mules on trek and good size waterproofed daysac + small holdall to store uneeded items in Marrakech. Pack mules are used to carry equipment, food and most personal gear. Pack heavy/dense items into your kitbag. It will be possible to store surplus baggage not required on the trek at the hotel in Marrakech. Don't forget that your bag will be carried by porters so please pack lightly.

Luggage allowance on tour: 15Kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Morocco

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Drink

Morocco

Bottle of Beer £: 2.50

Water £: 0.60

Country details

Morocco

Population: 32,000,000

Size of Country: 446,550 sq km

Major Language: Arabic, Berber, French.

Religion: Muslim and Christian

Electric Supply & Plugs

Morocco

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

These tour notes were printed on 07/03/2014 10:39:29