EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

High Atlas Traverse (CMA 2014)

CYCLING

TOUR DURATION **8** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Basic
Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Challenging
Tour Code: CMA

Tour Highlights - High Atlas Traverse

- ✓ Berber Villages Experience life amongst the traditional tribes of the Atlas
- ✓ Imilchil Lakes Visit the beautiful lakes of the Imilchil Lake plateau
- ✓ Dades Gorge Cycle through the dramatic landscapes of the Dades Valley and the beautiful Valley of the Roses
- ✓ Ait Ben Haddou Visit the Kasbah and the Ounila Valley

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	3 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Simple Village House 2 nights Simple Guesthouse
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 4 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Marrakech
End Point:	Tour ends: Marrakech
Included Bike:	21 gear Stockli XC mountain bikes with front suspension
Transport:	4WD, Bicycle
Countries:	Morocco

High Atlas Traverse

On this exhilarating tour we cycle across the High Atlas, discovering Berber settlement, palm fringed gorges and fortified kasbahs. We cross desert plateaux, admire mountain lakes and head for the dramatic fissures of the Dades Gorge, passing groves of almonds and walnuts

Why Book this tour

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 205 km over 6 days (an average of 34 km per day) with a further optional 35 km available. Over 50% of the cycling is off-road with a mixture of dirt roads and gravel tracks with some long fast descents on surfaces that require experience and care. The climbs include long ascents over both tarmac and off-road passes, up to 2900m altitude. 4WD support vehicles accompany the tour in full, providing transfers between cycling points and carrying luggage.

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

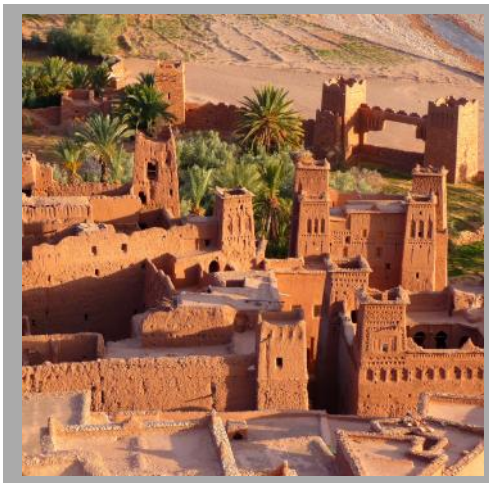
Our basic accommodation can offer the most rewarding and memorable places to stay. These are usually communal or camping style with shared facilities. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable and overall comfort levels are basic.

Cycling Grade: Challenging

Longer, more demanding rides for cyclists who enjoy hilly terrain with some challenging ascents. The routes demand a good level of fitness and may include some non-technical, off-road riding.

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

Our journey begins in Marrakech, Morocco's fascinating and atmospheric 'Red City'. Like many North African towns, Marrakech is divided into two distinct parts, the Gueliz (the modern French-built city) and the Medina (the Old City). For generations this enigmatic setting has been a meeting place for the mountain Berbers and the desert peoples of the south, who come to trade and barter amongst its colourful souks and labyrinthine alleyways. Boasting a staggering array of spectacular architecture and wonderful facades, the city's beating heart is the spectacular Djemma-el-Fna.Drive to El Ksiba, then cycle to Ait Sidi Hsaine

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Drive to El Ksiba, then cycle to Ait Sidi Hsaine

This morning we drive across the Haouz Plain to the charming village of El Ksiba, set high amongst the rugged landscapes of the Zaiane Highlands. After lunch we then begin our cycling, heading in the direction of Tizi n'Isly and the northern face of the High Atlas. Our journey takes us past several villages and through a landscape dominated by rolling valleys and wooded hills. Crossing a region that has traditionally been dominated by the Zaiane Berbers and nomadic herdsmen, we make our way towards the town of Ait Sidi Hsaine, where we spend this evening enjoying the hospitality of the local villagers. Cycling distance approximately 15-20 kilometres. Ascent approximately 200 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Village House**

DAY 3 Cycle to Imilchil and Lake Tislit

Departing the town after breakfast we continue south-east, climbing higher and crossing through a pass that takes us on to the Imilchil Lake plateau and the beautiful setting of Lake Tislit. From here we have an opportunity to take a dirt road that heads north-east, towards the waters of Lake Isli, traversing a landscape that is home to nomadic herdsmen who water and graze their sheep and goats amongst these steppe-like high pastures. After our visit we retrace our steps back to the town of Imilchil, where we spend this evening in a local auberge. Cycling distance approximately 45-55 kilometres. Ascent 1,000 metres/descent 380 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**

DAY 4 Cycle through the Melloul Valley and the Tizi n'Ouerz Pass to Ait Haddidou

Following a series of dirt roads we head for the hypnotic landscapes of the Melloul Valley, at the head of the Dades River. After negotiating the pass at Tizi n'Ouertz (2800 metres), we then descend into the Berber village of Ait Haddidou (2000 metres). The Ait Haddidou Berbers occupy the upper plateaux of the Assif Melloul, a land of deep gorges, arid limestone mountains and green river valleys. Renowned for one of the most famous Berber festivals in the Atlas (the 'Moussem'), the menfolk bedeck themselves in long burnouses and turbans, whilst the women still wear the traditional 'handiras' - cloaks of blue with white stripes. Cycling distance approximately 35-50 kilometres. Ascent 1,050 metres/descent 800 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Village House**

DAY 5 Cycle through the Dades Gorge to Ait Oudinar

Crossing the desert-like plateau we follow a dirt track this morning, passing through the village of Msemrir and continuing along a paved road into the dramatic vistas of the Dades Gorge, the upper section of the Dades Valley. Passing Kasbahs and kours (fortified villages) and fertile fields of almond and walnut trees, we take in the towering limestone cliffs and surreal shapes of the Dades Gorge, continuing into the valley and following a tarmac road towards our final destination for the day, the small Berber village of Ait Oudinar (1600 metres), lying at the end of the paved road. Cycling distance approximately 35 kilometres. Ascent/descent 250 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 6 Cycle through the Valley of the Roses to El Kelaa Mgouna. Drive to Ouarzazate

Departing the Dades Gorge we follow the course of the river south, heading towards the small settlement of Ait Youl where we turn west, leaving the main road and taking a dirt track that leads us to the village of Bou Trarar. From Bou Trarar our journey continues south, through the beautiful landscapes of the Valley of the Roses, an area renowned for its glowing red cliffs and fields of abundant roses. We end the day's ride in the town of El Kelaa Mgouna, from where we complete our journey to Ouarzazate by bus. Cycling distance approximately 35 kilometres. Ascent/descent 150 metres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 7 Explore Ait Ben Haddou and the Ounila Valley. Drive to Marrakech

Cycling out of Ouarzazate this morning we head to the town of Ait Ben Haddou, to pay a short visit to its Ksar (fortified city), a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has been used as a backdrop for a number of films including 'The Mummy', 'Gladiator' and 'The Living Daylights'. From here we then head out along the picturesque Ounila Valley towards the village of Anmiter, where we leave our bikes for the last time and return to Marrakech by road, travelling back to the city via Telouet and the Tizi n'Tichka Pass. Cycling distance approximately 40 kilometres. Ascent 700 metres/descent 350 metres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 Tour ends Marrakech

The tour ends in Marrakech this morning after breakfast.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Simple - These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, typically with en suite facilities.
Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

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, 6 lunches,4 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

N/A

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 at least £10 for tipping local crew.

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.

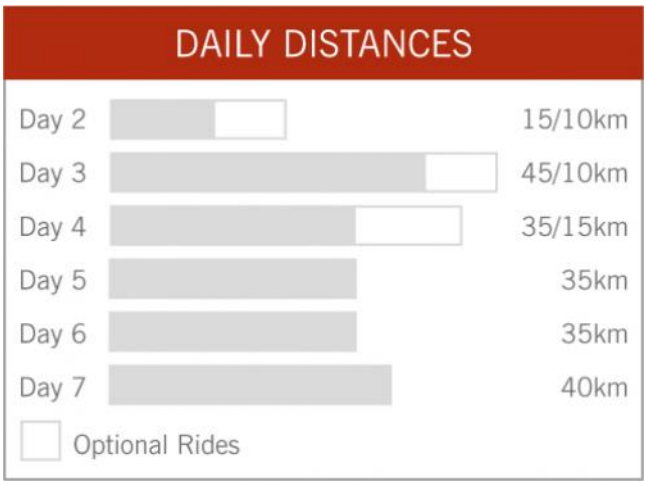
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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



Bike Details

Your included bike is a 21 gear Stockli XC mountain bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A handlebar bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. 2-Way pedals are provided and are therefore suitable for either normal or SPD shoes. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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.

We recommend you bring padded cycle shorts and quick drying cycle shirts for the daily cycling. Soaked cotton clothes tend not to dry while cycling. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall.

Evenings and nights can become quite cold between October and March. It is advisable to take warm clothing (e.g. track suit or thermal underwear) to sleep in, as the quality of heating in Moroccan hotel rooms can be variable. Keep in mind that at altitude and in the desert, temperatures can drop rapidly, so a warm sweater or fleece, plus waterproof/windproof shell garment, hat and gloves are essential. Don't forget your swimming costume in the warmer months.

Equipment

We recommend you bring your own helmet. Bring a water-bottle that clips on to the bike. Wrap-around sunglasses help prevent insects or pollen getting in your eyes. A penknife is useful for picnic lunches. For additional comfort you may like to bring a gel seat cover. A torch is also useful.

Footwear

Lightweight walking shoes/trainers for cycling. Comfortable shoes/sandals for evenings and visiting the sites and towns.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Total allowance: 44lb/20kg. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

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 CO_2, 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.

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