



Challenge yourself by trekking in the largest hot desert on earth:

# SAHARA DESERT TREK + COMMUNITY PROJECT

9 - 16 March 2024



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## Sahara Trek & Community Project

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### Trip overview

#### The Trek

This trek in the Moroccan Sahara gives you an insight into this vast and diverse landscape as well as the Berber way of life. You will spend two full days and two half days trekking across ancient dried up river beds, sand dunes and vast sun-baked plains. Camping each night gives you a chance to experience the stunning stars in the night sky (weather permitting) and the traditional Berber cuisine cooked by the team is second to none.

#### The Community Project

You will spend two days helping a community project in Marrakech. We anticipate you will help an organisation which supports vulnerable young people with education and vocational training after they have been orphaned, abused or rejected by their family. The organisation also supports elderly people whose families have abandoned them by creating a comfortable social environment for them to spend their golden years. Your tasks will vary depending on the need at the time but you're likely to get involved with refurbishment, redecorating and gardening which will make an instant impact at this incredible centre.

#### Morocco

Situated in North West Africa, the Kingdom of Morocco is a country with a population of over 35 million people. Morocco has a diverse geography with both Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines in addition to a rugged mountainous and desert interior. The mighty Atlas Mountains and vast Sahara Desert make Morocco an adventure lover's paradise, and Marrakech is a wonderful place to visit with its spicy aromas, peaceful mosques, diverse entertainers and a cacophony of merchants in the bustling medina.

#### Sahara

The Sahara covers an area of over 3,600,000 square miles making it the third largest desert on the planet (after Antarctica and the Arctic respectively). It stretches from the Mediterranean and Atlantic to the north, the Red Sea to the east, and as far south as the Niger River. The Sahara is the world's hottest desert with record temperatures exceeding 50°C. Despite its inhospitable conditions, the Sahara has many species of flora such as acacia, palms and grass which have adapted to the arid conditions.

#### Berbers

The Berbers (or Amazighen – 'free people') are an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa whose culture can be traced back over 4,000 years. Traditionally, Berber men take care of livestock and Berber women take care of the home and make handicrafts for use around the home and to sell. The lifestyle is generally nomadic or semi-nomadic and there are large Berber communities in the rural parts of the country.

## What is the experience like?

### Who accompanies us?

You will be accompanied by professional English-speaking Berber guides who have an excellent knowledge of culture and hiking in the region. The guides are first aid trained and will support you throughout your journey. You will also be accompanied by a team of support staff including cooks and camel handlers, and a Different Travel Company UK tour manager.

### How tough is it?

The trek is rated moderately challenging for someone of a good fitness level. The terrain is a mixture of hard, flat sundried plains, dried up ancient riverbeds, wide sandy dune fields and hard rocky outcrops. Temperatures pose a specific challenge with temperatures historically reaching 35°C. You must be of a good fitness level before departure, to ensure fast recovery each day.

### What is the climate like?

Temperatures can range from 25°C to 35°C during the day and drop to around 0°C at night however you must be prepared for variations to this which are out of our control. Weather during the trek will be dry but there may be some strong winds. Rain, although very rare, is not impossible. Please note: the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate but climate change can impact the seasons so you may experience uncharacteristic conditions during the trip which are out of our control. The guides will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and safety of the group.

### How do we get to the desert?

To get to and from the desert requires long drives (approx. 9 hours including breaks) along winding mountain roads which offer stunning views of the snow-capped peaks and lush valleys. If you suffer from motion sickness you are advised to bring your usual anti-nausea medication with you. Regular stops are taken.

### What is the camping like?

During the trek you will sleep in tents (two to a tent), or if the weather is good you can sleep outside under the stars; highly recommended! Foam sleeping mats are provided but you will need to bring a sleeping bag. Toilet facilities consist of a small toilet 'tent' covering a hole in the ground. There are no showers or bathing facilities in the desert so you must bring a pack of baby wipes.

### What is the food like?

During the trek meals are cooked by a chef who will prepare Moroccan dishes. Breakfast and lunch will be eaten alfresco, and evening meals will be in a mess tent at camp. Plates, mugs, cutlery and other equipment are provided. While staying in Marrakech (and Ouarzazate if applicable) meals will be at the hotel, the project or at local restaurants.



## Practical information

### Who can take part?

The minimum age is 18. It may be possible to participate if you are 16 or 17 years old but you must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. There is no upper age limit. The ideal candidate would be fit, healthy and determined, open to adventure and adaptable to unexpected changes.

### Medical Declaration

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues must be specified. All your medical details are treated in the strictest confidence.

The information will be securely screened by a qualified medical professional, and details provided to your tour manager and local guides so our staff are adequately informed and prepared to support you during the trip. By completing this booking form you are giving consent for us to contact you confidentially with any follow up questions regarding your health.

If you declare any medical conditions you may be asked to provide more information, or we may request to contact your GP.

In the event that your medical issues at the time of booking represent a concern for your safety and wellbeing, or the safety and wellbeing of others in the group, you may be recommended not to take part. If this happens your booking will not be confirmed and the deposit will be refunded.

We must be informed if any conditions or medication change, or if new conditions develop. If necessary confirmation of fitness to travel from your GP or specialist may be required.

Please note that we will never unreasonably deny participation on a trip nor contravene the Equality Act 2010.

## COVID-19

Your health and safety is our top priority so rest assured that we are taking steps to ensure you not only have a memorable experience, but a safe one too.

We constantly monitor and follow the advice of the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) who provide recommendations and advice to British travellers about travel to a certain destination.

Health and safety is our top priority so we will **NEVER** operate a trip in an area where there is clear and present risk to our team members, whether that is due to a health outbreak, political instability, natural disasters or anything else.

If travel restrictions either in the UK or Morocco prevent safe travel we will look to either postpone or cancel your trip at no cost to you.

Please note that at the time of travel there may be enhanced safety and security measures in airports, bag drop may take longer, and you may need to provide a certificate of health or proof of vaccination.

We will inform you about any information pertinent to your travel arrangements.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us on [info@different-travel.com](mailto:info@different-travel.com).



## Trip cost

A £395 registration fee is payable at the time of booking. You can then choose one of the three payment options:

1. **Self-funded:** Pay your own tour costs balance of £995 by 29 December 2023. You are welcome to fundraise separately for any charity of your choice, but this is not mandatory. Any fundraising undertaken cannot be used for your trip costs.
2. **Sponsorship:** Fundraise £1,990 for your chosen charity by 15 December 2023. This includes your £995 tour costs balance and a £995 donation to charity.
3. **Flexi:** Pay your own tour costs balance of £995 and fundraise £995 for a charity of your choice by 29 December 2023. Any fundraising undertaken cannot be used for your trip costs.

### What is included?

- ✓ Return flights from London (inc. current taxes and fuel surcharges),
- ✓ Transfers and transport in Morocco
- ✓ Accommodation in hotels (4 nights)
- ✓ Tents and sleeping mats on trek (3 nights)
- ✓ All meals as specified
- ✓ Local guides, camels and camel handlers on trek
- ✓ Project co-ordination and materials
- ✓ Different Travel UK tour manager.

### What is excluded?

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Tips (£30-£35pp)
- ✗ Personal expenses (e.g. drinks, souvenirs etc.)
- ✗ Vaccinations



## Itinerary

### Day 1 (Saturday 9 March 2024):

#### London - Marrakech

We fly together to Marrakech where we are met by our guide and transfer to our hotel for the night. Depending on flight arrival times we may start the journey to the desert today and stay in Ouarzazate tonight (approx. 4-5 hours).

*Meals: Dinner*

### Day 2 (Sunday 10 March 2024):

#### Marrakech - Sahara

If staying in Marrakech we set off early, crossing the Atlas Mountains and following ancient caravan routes into the Sahara, stopping for lunch in Ouarzazate on the way (journey time approx. 9 hours including stops.) If starting in Ouarzazate the journey to the desert takes approximately 4-5 hours.

This afternoon we will arrive in the desert and be welcomed by the rest of the trek team and the camels before commencing our trek, stopping overnight to camp under the stars of the Sahara. Approx. trek distance: 5km.

*Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner*

*Overnight: Camping*

*Approx Trek Distance: 5km*

### Days 3-4 (Monday 11 – Tuesday 12 March 2024):

#### Sahara Desert

Our trek continues through the desert as we traverse sand dunes and rocky, lunar landscapes for the next two days. We are aided by our local Berber team comprising of the guides, cook and camel owners (the camels are our porters, carrying our luggage and equipment). Each day you enjoy the varied Saharan landscape and learn about how important it is to respect and comply with the forces of nature in the desert. On average we will cover 15-20km per day but this will vary. As the trek progresses we learn how the nomadic people of the Sahara live: from cooking to sleeping out under the stars and reading the magnificent Saharan night sky.

*Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner*

*Overnight: Camping*

*Approx Trek Distance: 15-20km per day*

### Day 5 (Wednesday 13 March 2024):

#### Sahara - Marrakech

This morning it's the final leg of the trek to a small village where we bid farewell to the trek team and head back to Marrakech (approx. 9 hours' drive).

*Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner*

*Overnight: Hotel*

*Approx Trek Distance: 5km*

### Day 6-7 (Thursday 14 - Friday 15 March 2024):

#### Marrakech

After a good night's rest we spend two days assisting at the community project. Typical tasks include decorating, refurbishment, gardening or generally working to improve the environment. No experience is necessary, just a willingness to get involved.

*Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner*

*Overnight: Hotel*

### Day 8 (Saturday 16 March 2024):

#### Marrakech - London

Depending on flight times, have some free time to explore Marrakech before your flight back to the UK.

*Meals: Breakfast*

*N.B. This itinerary may change due to unusual weather, the ability of the group and so on. We will do our best to keep to the itinerary but we cannot be held responsible for changes that occur outside of our control. In all circumstances your guide and tour leader will have the final say in the interest of the group's health and safety.*



## Before you go! Information to prepare you for the trip

Travel practicalities and country information  
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Kit list

### Travel practicalities and country information

#### Visas

British passport holders do not currently require a visa to enter Morocco but you will need to complete a landing card. Travellers of other nationalities must check the entry requirements at the Moroccan Embassy. You must have at least 6 months validity on your passport from the date of entry. Please note that immigration queues in Marrakech airport arrivals area can lead to long delays upon arrival.

#### Travel insurance

The Different Travel Company will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip however unexpected things can occur such as delays, medical problems, baggage loss, cancellation by you etc. The purchase of travel insurance is mandatory; you are advised to organise it at the time of booking to ensure you are covered immediately. Different Travel is an Unregulated Introducer for Campbell Irvine Direct insurance policies. You can find out more here:

<https://microsite.campbellirvinedirect.com/differenttravel>.

Please note: most travel insurance policies protect you before departure too so it is advised to buy insurance as close to booking as possible as it may protect you against the loss of your non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee if you cancel due to injury, illness etc.

#### Phone and Wi-Fi access

Morocco is served by a number of mobile networks including Orange, Maroc Telecom, Wana and Inwi. Coverage is widespread, even in the desert but your access to phone reception will vary depending on your home network, roaming capabilities, contract type and mobile handset. In general most people should have reception while in the cities and possibly during some of the trek route. Wi-Fi is available in hotels (although it may be very slow and unreliable). Please contact your phone provider to find out details about costs and remember to turn off data roaming on your phone to avoid incurring high data charges.

#### Electricity

Electricity in Morocco is 220V-240V. The plugs used are European two round pin plugs. Electricity is only available at the hotels. Please bring the necessary plug adaptor, ideally one which has USB ports so you can charge multiple devices at once. Charging is not possible in the desert but if access to electricity during the trek is important to you, you are advised to bring a portable power pack (power bank or battery pack) which when fully charged allows you multiple charges of USB-powered devices such as phones. You should buy a power pack with a minimum capacity of 15,000mAh (max. 20,000mAh due to airline regulations) and these are widely available online. Solar powered chargers are usually fairly reliable for this trek due to the high possibility of sunny conditions however they do not usually store power so devices need to be plugged in while the solar panel charges.

## Money

The currency of Morocco is the dirham. At the time of writing there were approx. 12.61 dirham to the pound. You need to bring money for tips (approx. £30-35), drinks and souvenirs; around £100 should suffice depending on how much you wish to buy.

## Accessing cash

You cannot buy dirhams in the UK so we recommend that you withdraw cash from ATMs or exchange cash locally. There are many ATMs in Marrakech and it may be possible to stop at an ATM during the journey to the desert if required.

Please note that most banks charge for overseas withdrawals and transactions and some block cards when they are used abroad so please inform them of your travel plans before departure. You may prefer to use a prepaid currency card loaded with pounds to withdraw cash instead of using a bank card.

If you prefer to exchange cash locally you are recommended to take pounds Sterling and change it to dirhams. There are bureau de changes in the arrivals area of Marrakech airport. Please note that you cannot exchange dirhams back to pounds after security in Marrakech airport.

## Tipping

While tipping is not mandatory, it is recommended and greatly appreciated by the local staff and the trek team. We would recommend allowing around £30-35 per.

## Photocopies

Remember to photocopy all your documents (insurance details, passport, credit/debit cards etc.) and take a copy with you during the trip, stored separately from the original copies. You should also scan and email these documents to yourself and leave a copy with a trusted family member or friend. If you lose any of your documents you will then have access to a copy with you and online. You may also wish to upload your documents to cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

## Photography

When taking photographs of the local people, you must ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission can cause offence. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome.

## Religion

Islam is the established state religion of Morocco. Almost the entire population is Sunni Muslim. The monarch is the supreme Muslim authority in the country. About one percent of the population is Christian, and less than 0.2 percent is Jewish.

## Language

Arabic is Morocco's official language, spoken by about three-quarters of the population. The various Berber dialects are still spoken in rural areas but with less frequency. French is also a common second language among the urban educated classes.

Some helpful phrases in Arabic include:

Hello: As-salaamu alaykum

Welcome: Marhaban

My name is.../I am...: Ana...

Response: Wa alaykum as-salaam

Thank you: Shukran

## Trek knowledge

### Accommodation and campsite facilities

You will stay in a hotel with en-suite facilities while in Marrakech (and Ouarzazate if flight arrival times permit us to start the journey to the desert upon arrival), and you will camp during the trek. You will stay in hotel rooms on a twin or triple-share basis, and there will be two people per tent while camping. A single-occupancy hotel room may be possible subject to availability and payment of a single supplement.

During the trek, weather permitting, there may be the opportunity to sleep outside under the stars; this is strongly recommended. Tents and sleeping mats are provided but you must bring a sleeping bag and sleeping bag liner. A dining tent, cutlery and crockery are provided.

### Hygiene and toilet facilities

The hotels have en-suite facilities with flushing toilets and hot showers. Toilet paper should always be placed in the bin, not flushed.

At camp there will be a toilet tent which offers privacy over a pit in the sand. Please put used toilet paper into a sealable nappy bag or sanitary disposal bag and put into the main trek bin bag. After you have used the toilet, please cover your waste with sand to avoid smells and flies for the next person who visits the toilet tent. There are no bathing facilities during the trek so please bring a small pack of baby wipes and a bottle of hand sanitizer for personal hygiene. If you need to use the toilet during the trek day you must find a private area off the trail. You must never leave used toilet paper on the ground; this must be packed up into a nappy bag or sanitary disposal bag, pop it in your daypack and dispose of it properly at camp (please bring your own nappy sacks with you). You should bring one to two rolls of toilet paper for your own use.

### Altitude

This trek does not take place in an area of high altitude. During the drive between Marrakech and the desert you will cross a high mountain pass at Tizi n'Tichka (2260m). You are extremely unlikely to notice any effects of the altitude as you approach, and pass, this point.

## Food and drink

### Water

Tap water is not safe to drink in Morocco, even at the hotel. You must not brush your teeth or rinse your mouth with the tap water, only use purified, boiled or bottled water. It is best to avoid ice in drinks. Mineral water is provided during the trek and you must start the day with at least 3 litres of water in your daypack. Mint and verbena teas will be served during breakfast and dinner, and soup will be served at dinner. At breakfast you can also make yourself coffee, tea or hot chocolate. If you have any preferences (e.g. decaff, herbal tea etc.) you should bring your own supply.

### Keeping hydrated

During the trek you will need to drink at least 3 litres of water per day to stay hydrated, *plus* any soups or hot drinks served. Electrolyte tablets (e.g. Nuun, High5, PowerBar etc.) are flavoured effervescent tablets which contain salts and minerals which are naturally lost from your body when you sweat. By adding these tablets to your water it not only offers flavour to your water but it can help prevent dehydration before it begins. Electrolyte tablets are widely available in outdoors stores and online for around £8 for 12 tablets. You may also wish to bring a small supply of rehydration salts (e.g. Dioralyte) which treat dehydration.

## Water bottle

You will need to bring your own bottles to carry at least three litres of water per day. Some people will bring a 2-3 litre CamelBak hydration system (for effortless access to water while you trek) plus one 1-litre water bottles (e.g. plastic Nalgene or metal Sigg bottle). Some people prefer to bring three 1-litre bottles. The choice is yours. If you're bringing a CamelBak hydration system, a separate 1-litre bottle is essential as it can be used as a backup if your hydration system fails.

**Please write your name on all your bottles in marker pen.** Please note that 'own brand' and cheap hydration systems are notorious for splitting, leaking or valves not functioning properly. CamelBak and Platypus are the leader in this market because their products are significantly better quality and more reliable.

## Dietary requirements

The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for if we are notified in advance. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible. Please note that we cannot guarantee that food preparation will have taken place in a contamination free environment.

## Food

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included throughout the trip as specified on the itinerary. Typically breakfast will comprise bread, pancakes, jams, soft cheese and hot drinks, lunch tends to include fresh salads, pasta, bread and evening meals begins with a soup, followed by tagine (a traditional chicken, beef or lamb stew with vegetables served in a clay pot) served with vegetables, bread and couscous, and a dessert of fresh fruit. A cup of mint or verbena tea is commonly used to end the meal. Please notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking.

## Snacks

You may wish to bring a selection of snacks for energy, a pick-me-up or a little taste of home. Please bring snacks you have tried before (and enjoy!) so they are appetising to you. Items such as sweets, individually wrapped cake bars, protein bars and dried fruit are ideal but don't forget to bring savoury treats also such as salted nuts, Cheddar biscuits or salted crackers.

## Kit tips

### Discount

When you book you will receive a discount and vouchers booklet. Please check the documents section of your online profile.

### Clothing

Your clothes should be made of technical fabrics designed to wick sweat away from your body which keep clothes dry and smelling fresh. Merino wool, nylon, polyester, polypropylene and bamboo fabrics are all effective technical fabrics. Cotton clothes absorb sweat, stay damp and can lead to chafing, discomfort (and also get smelly fast). Technical items can be worn for days without smelling meaning you don't need to buy, or pack, as many items of clothing.

Sports, gym or running clothes are usually non-cotton so check what you have already before you go shopping. If you select the right garments you can comfortably wear these for the entire trek. Remember it gets cold at night and in the mornings so please bring warm layers (e.g. fleece, hoody, insulated jacket) and a warm hat.

## Top clothing tips

A loose fitting, non-cotton long sleeved shirt will keep you cool better than a short sleeved t-shirt as technically covering your skin keeps you in the shade. It also helps prevent sunburn. A long sleeved shirt also offers the flexibility to roll sleeves up and down as required. A t-shirt is also fine but you must be vigilant about applying sunscreen. Shoulders must be covered if you pass through any desert villages.

Lightweight non-cotton zip-off/convertible trek trousers are also ideal for the same reason as bringing a non-cotton shirt in that it keeps your skin in the shade; however sports leggings and shorts are fine too. Please note that ladies wearing shorts will need to cover their legs if you pass through any desert villages.

Thermals would be ideal for sleeping at night.

## Marrakech dress code

In Marrakech the local people are familiar with visiting foreigners but it is respectful to pay attention to what you wear to avoid causing offence or attracting unwanted attention. Legs and shoulders are considered 'private' body parts in many parts of Morocco and women must keep these areas covered in Marrakech to avoid unwanted attention and to avoid causing offence. Lightweight trousers with a loose shirt or maxi dresses teamed with a pashmina are ideal outfits. Men should avoid shorts higher than knee length, vest tops or going topless. During your time at the community project you should bring old clothing you don't mind getting dirty or with splashes of paint, and you should wear trainers or boots – no sandals.

## Cobber neck cooling wrap

A highly recommended accessory for the trek is a body cooling neck wrap known as a 'Cobber'. When this neck wrap is submerged in water for 30 minutes the poly-crystals absorb it making them swell and turn cold. You wear it around your neck and it cools the blood flowing through your carotid arteries and keeps your body temperature down. One 30 minute submersion in water keeps the crystals cool and moist for 3 days before they start to dry out; perfect for your time in the desert. They can be purchased for less than £10 from eBay or Amazon.

## Footwear

You should bring lightweight, breathable trekking boots with good ankle support and a high quality flexible sole such as Vibram; walking trainers are unsuitable. Please do not bring Army style 'desert boots', normal trekking boots are fine. If you are buying a new pair of boots, please try on lots of pairs before you buy; don't buy online unless you've tried them on first. Please ensure you buy new boots well in advance of departure so you have time to break them in properly. You are strongly advised to wear your boots on the plane (or take in your hand baggage) in case there are any problems or delays with your luggage. Comfortable boots are the most difficult item to replace at short notice. Trainers are best for the days at the project.

## Gloves

You will need a pair of heavy duty gloves/gardening gloves for use at the project.

## Gaiters

Ankle height gaiters are strongly recommended to keep sand out of boots and reduce the risk of blisters.

## Headwear

A hat with a wide brim is essential or you could buy a local headscarf called a cheche (available to purchase en-route to the desert). An umbrella can also be useful to protect your head from the sun. You may wish to consider bringing a Buff – a useful multifunctional headwear item (see buffwear.co.uk or similar products).

## Head torch

This is a vital piece of kit. Petzl is one brand which makes good quality headlamps but there are many head torches available from other companies. Please ensure you take an LED torch as ones with bulbs are not bright enough. Bring your head torch with fresh batteries inside it, and take a full set of spare batteries. Do not bring a wind-up head torch as these are unreliable. Keep your head torch in your backpack every day.

## Hiking poles

Hiking poles can be very useful on ascents and descents, particularly when carrying a heavy pack on uneven terrain. Poles are also very useful for stability. They are not mandatory but are recommended. You should use them on your training walks to familiarise yourself on how to use them. If you bring hiking poles they must fit inside your suitcase/kitbag for the purposes of the international flight.

## Sleeping bag

The expected night time temperature is approx. 0°C so you need to bring a sleeping bag with a 'comfort' rating of 0°C or lower, not an 'extreme' rating of 0°C. There is a critical difference between the two ratings, as outlined here:

- Comfort — the temperature at which you can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed position.
- Extreme — the minimum temperature at you can remain for six hours without risk of death from hypothermia.

### Some sleeping bags with a comfort of 0°C or warmer:

Snugpak 'The Sleeping Bag' (comfort -2°C, £34.95);

Snugpak Tactical 2 (comfort 0°C, £129.95);

Snugpak Softie 6 Twilight (comfort 0°C £114.95);

Snugpak Travelpak 3 (comfort -3°C, £54.95);

Snugpak 'The Navigator' (comfort -2°C, £34.95);

Ayacucho Sirius 200 (comfort 0°C £80);

Women's Starlight II (comfort -2°C £100)

Mountain Hardwear Lamina20 (comfort -2°C £135);

and many more.

Please note: that the temperature guidance is based on historical averages in the desert at this time of year and we cannot be held responsible if the weather conditions are different than expected.

## Sleeping bag liner

A silk sleeping bag liner is recommended to complement your sleeping bag as it adds an extra layer of insulation to keep you warm if it's cool. If it's too warm you can sleep under your sleeping bag liner with your sleeping bag unzipped. A sleeping bag liner also protects your sleeping bag from dirt, sweat and damage. Silk sleeping bag liners are quite expensive if purchased on the high street, so consider eBay where you can purchase directly from the manufacturers (usually Vietnam or China) at a fraction of the price. Make sure you search for 'pure silk' sleeping bag liners, not 'satin' (which is usually low quality and synthetic).

## Sleeping mat

A compressed foam mat is provided. You do not need to bring your own mat.

## Socks

It is important that the socks you choose are high quality, non-cotton and will not slip down in your boots which causes blisters. Never wear cotton socks which absorb sweat making them damp and more likely to rub against your feet, causing blisters. Socks containing Coolmax (a brand of polyester) or nylon have wicking properties which means that it pulls sweat away from the skin for it to evaporate. Good brands to consider include Bridgedale, Smartwool and Brasher.

## Sunglasses

These are important even on overcast days. They must offer a minimum of 100% UV protection, and polarized sunglasses are ideal. Taking a spare pair is recommended.

## Luggage

This trip is different to a standard holiday so you will need the following four luggage items:

### 1. A small daypack

You are responsible for carrying your own daypack containing essentials for each day. We recommend you bring a 25 litre rucksack which **must** have a hip belt and a chest strap. High quality brands to consider when looking for a suitable pack include Osprey, Berghaus and Lowe Alpine (amongst others) and you are strongly advised to visit a reputable store like Cotswold to have your backpack fitted, as they come in a variety of sizes, and some brands offer male and female specific fits. You can expect to carry your personal first aid kit, sun cream, three litres of water, snacks, toilet paper, wet wipes and camera. It could weigh 6-8kg when packed, so you should make your backpack selection carefully and ensure it fits correctly and is comfortable. You will not have access to your main pack while trekking.

### 2. A kit bag/holdall

You will need a soft-sided kit bag to hold your trek-specific items such as your sleeping bag, change of clothes, toiletries and so on. This kitbag will be carried by the camels and must weigh no more than 8kg. This can be a holdall, duffle bag or large rucksack and it doesn't matter what size it is as long as all your kit fits inside. A suitcase or holdall with wheels is not suitable. If you wish you can use this bag to hold your checked luggage for the flights; please ensure you bring a small separate bag you can store items in not required for the trek at the hotel while you're trekking.



### 3. A suitcase (optional)

For the flights, you may be more comfortable packing all your items (including your empty trek kit bag) into a suitcase. This is entirely your choice. If you bring a suitcase, it will be stored at the hotel along with anything not required for the trek (e.g. toiletries, travel clothes, books etc.).

4. You should bring some **combination padlocks** to secure your luggage.

## Responsible travel

We are environmentally conscious and aim to minimise our impact as much as possible. Key points:

- Never leave toilet paper or litter on the trail.
- Don't dispose of fruit peel, cores or seeds on the ground; although they decompose eventually they are unsightly and may attract animals.
- Turn off lights when not in rooms.
- Minimise your water usage by having short showers.

### Animal welfare issues

In J'maa el Fna you will find 'entertainers' trying to entice tourists into photo opportunities with chained up monkeys or snakes. The animal welfare issues are plain to see and you should say a firm 'no' (*La* in Arabic) if you are approached by these people. Please do not take photographs as this encourages this abhorrent animal welfare practice. We also request that you do not take horse-drawn carriages around Marrakech for the same reasons.

### Begging

Begging is common in Marrakech and occasionally in the small villages before and after the trek. As part of our responsible tourism policy we strongly advise against giving directly to beggars or offering gifts to children. Gift-giving can lead to individuals pestering other travellers as they believe begging is more profitable than searching for work or attending school. In particular sweets should not be given to children as dental care is difficult to obtain and tooth decay can lead to long-term health problems.

### Etiquette

Always endeavour to be polite and respectful. If you show respect then it will be reciprocated: Keep noise to a minimum, especially early in the morning and late at night. Be respectful to your guides and hosts; don't forget to say please and thank you. Be considerate of the feelings of other group members.

### Scams

Please also do your research on common scams in Marrakech. In particular watch out for scammers telling you about a 'famous Berber leather market' or visit to a tannery 'today only'.

### Shopping/haggling

The souks of Marrakech sell a vast array of gifts and souvenirs; ornamental teapots, spices, tea, argan oil, tagines, clothing and shoes, soap, cosmetics, jewellery and even fridge magnets. Haggling is expected when shopping and the first price is often three or four times higher than the true value of the item; you should engage with the vendor to encourage rapport then only pay what you think is a good price, don't try to get the price as low as possible.

## Fitness, health and safety

### Fitness training

You should start training as soon as you sign up for the trip. The best form of training for a trek is get outside and start walking. If you're not a regular walker, start slowly with short distances then as you get more comfortable, increase your mileage and add in more challenging terrain until you can comfortably walk for several consecutive days, for around 8 hours at a time, on hilly terrain while maintaining a comfortable pace without needing to stop more than frequently than once an hour for a 5-minute rest.

Hill walking while carrying a fully packed backpack while wearing your hiking boots should feature predominantly in your training as this will help prepare your body for the terrain and baggage load you will experience during the trek.

Other activities which can complement hill walking include running, cycling, gym workouts and boot camps etc. Developing your core and leg muscle strength is also important so exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups, planks and crunches will really enhance your training. These exercises can be done at home; no gym needed.

You can download a number of free apps, which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MapMyWalk, C25K (couch to 5k run), MyFitnessPal.

Please note that attempting to complete the trek without any training may make the experience unnecessarily difficult and hinder your experience, and also the experience of your teammates. The local guides, in consultation with your Different travel tour manager, may advise that if you are not fit enough to continue that you leave the trek.

### Vaccinations and travel health

Different Travel regrets that we cannot provide medical advice or recommendations. You are advised to seek medical advice at least 8 weeks before travelling to ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For general information visit [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) or [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk) but your GP or travel health professional should be the first stop for a consultation tailored to your medical history. Please note that failure to be adequately vaccinated, or take necessary prophylactic medication can invalidate travel insurance policies as it is considered that you have not taken necessary precautions.

### First aid kit

You should bring a small first aid kit of essential items which is for your own personal use and keep it in your backpack. Suggested items to include: personal prescription medicine, Compeed blister plasters, painkillers, plasters, antiseptic wipes, anti-histamine tablets, indigestion remedy, Imodium (Loperamide), rehydration sachets, lip balm with SPF, antiseptic cream, zinc oxide tape etc. Please keep the contents to a minimum as you have to carry it yourself.

### Insect repellent

There can be a number of mosquitoes in Marrakech and in the desert so between the group it's worth having one or two bottles to share. 50% DEET is the most effective repellent available for use on your skin. Never use 100% DEET on your skin as it is not designed to be used this way. Please also ensure you wear long trousers and long-sleeved tops in evenings to minimise the chance of bites.



## MOROCCO: SAHARA TREK + COMMUNITY PROJECT

9 - 16 March 2024



### **Emergencies and evacuations**

In the unlikely event of a serious illness or accident, the local team will ensure you are transferred as swiftly as possible to the nearest hospital. Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for airlifting/emergency evacuations as this can be required to reach casualties on more remote trails in an emergency. You are recommended to bring a credit card during the trip in the event that you need to pay for medical treatment upfront in the event of an emergency.

### **Safety**

Please take common-sense precautions while travelling to ensure your safety and the protection of your belongings. For example: leave flashy jewellery, watches and accessories at home; keep wallets out of sight stowed in a handbag or backpack rather than sticking out of a pocket; don't leave bags unattended at any time; carry cameras in their cases rather than carrying them openly with the camera strap; split cash into different pockets rather than carrying all your money in one place, especially immediately after you have used the ATM; and so on.

### **Zinc Oxide tape**

This tape is really useful to prevent blisters. When you feel your boots start to rub against your feet, you should stop and remove any debris from your boots and check your feet. If a hot spot is developing (a red, sore area without broken skin) you can apply zinc oxide tape to the area and it will stop (or slow down) a blister developing. If you are too late to prevent the blister then you should clean the area and apply a Compeed blister plaster instead.

*Last updated January 2023*



## KIT LIST - SAHARA TREK + PROJECT

The kit you take on your trek can make the difference between being 'just a trek' or a 'memorable trek'.

Our kit lists are put together with feedback from our own experiences and that of participants who have taken part in our previous trips.

The items on this list do not take into account your personal preferences based on your previous trekking experiences, or individual requirements.

PLEASE NOTE: This list is just a guideline and is not exhaustive or take into account personal preferences.

For information about items on this list please refer to the trip dossier or contact The Different Travel Company on [info@different-travel.com](mailto:info@different-travel.com)

\*Please consider eco-friendly or biodegradable options.

ESSENTIAL

SUGGESTED

OPTIONAL

DOCUMENTS + FLIGHT ESSENTIALS	✓
Passport and Copy	
E-Tickets	
Travel insurance	
ATM and credit card (s)	
Cash (£ Sterling)	
Pen for immigration forms	
Sunglasses (preferably polarized)	
Mobile phone + charger	
Camera + spare batteries	

LUGGAGE	✓
Suitcase/large holdall	
Daypack (25 – 30 litres)	
Hand Luggage (take note of dimensions from airline)	
Combination padlocks	

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	✓
Trekking boots: either worn on flight or carried in hand luggage	
Boots or sturdy trainers for project	
Lightweight trek trousers (zip off trousers ideal)	
Non-cotton, technical t-shirts	
Non-cotton long sleeved top/shirt	
Socks and underwear	
Warm fleece or sweater (for evening and morning)	
Thermal top and trousers for sleeping	
Old clothes for project	
Sun hat with brim (a cheche can be bought en-route to the desert)	
Warm hat for night	
Sandals for camp	
Heavy duty gloves for project	
Neck cooling 'Cobber' or cooling towel	
Buff ( <a href="http://www.buffwear.co.uk">www.buffwear.co.uk</a> )	
Gaiters (for the sand and will help stop blisters)	

HEALTH AND HYGIENE*	✓
Hygiene kit to include: toothbrush and toothpaste, antiperspirant deodorant, wet wipes, shampoo, conditioner, nail brush and nail care kit	
Personal first aid kit to include: prescription medicine, insect repellent, ibuprofen, paracetamol, plasters, blister plasters (e.g. Compeed), Imodium, rehydration salts (Dioralyte), antiseptic cream (e.g. Savlon), Anti-histamine cream/tablets, lip balm with SPF protection, zinc oxide tape, nail scissors/tweezers, muscle rub (e.g. Deep Heat)	
Hairbrush/comb	
Lateral flow tests (min x2)	
Disposable masks	
Feminine care products	

OTHER KIT	✓
Sleeping bag (comfort 0°C)	
Sleeping bag liner (cotton/silk)	
Sun block (high SPF)	
Toilet bag: toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitiser, nappy sacks	
2 ltr water hydration system (e.g. Camelbak)	
1 ltr water bottle	
LED head torch + spare batteries	
Adaptor (European 2 round pin)	
Ear plugs	
Casual shoes for Marrakech	
Casual clothing for Marrakech	
Hiking poles – to be stowed in hold luggage for flight	
Energy food/snack bars	
Swimwear for hotel	
Bags for dirty washing	
Spare glasses/contact lenses	
Video camera + charger	
MP3 player/ipod	
Portable power bank	
Books/packs of cards	
Travel pillow	