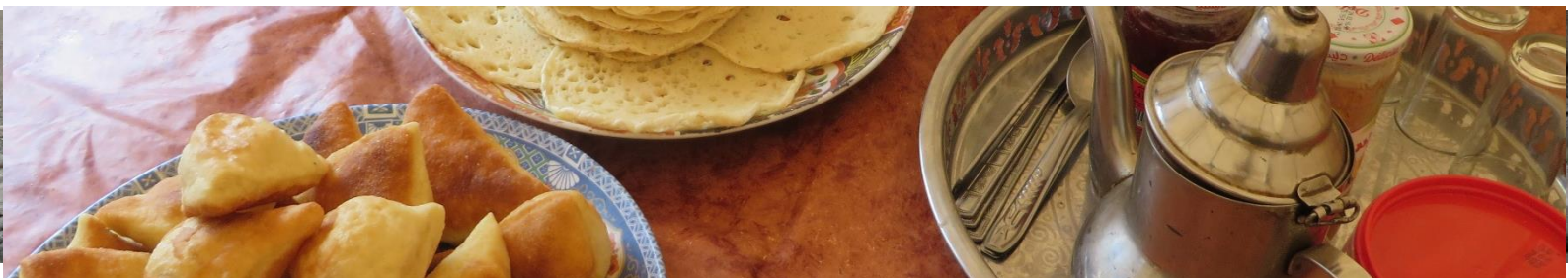




Destination: MOROCCO

Duration: 5 DAYS

Difficulty: CHALLENGING



A-Z of the Mount Toubkal Trek

A is for Alcohol. Being a Muslim nation, alcohol is not widely available at cafés, restaurants or hotels in Morocco.

A is also for Arrival. British passport holders do not currently require a visa to enter Morocco. Other passport holders should check the entry requirements at the Moroccan Embassy. You are recommended to have at least 6 months validity on your passport. Upon arrival you will go through immigration where your passport will be stamped, collect your baggage, go through customs and be met by your local guide. The arrivals hall has ATM machines, shops and bureau de changes should you wish to use any of these facilities.

B is for Begging. Begging can be seen in Morocco particularly in the large cities, such as Marrakech where you may find people begging for money or food. We do not recommend giving to beggars or children as it encourages reliance on tourists. Please speak to your local guide for more information on ways to give appropriately.

B is also for Books. There are many good guidebooks about Morocco including the following:
Trailblazer Guides Moroccan Atlas - The Trekking Guide (Oct 2014); 978-1905864591; £14.99
Lonely Planet Morocco (August 2017); ISBN: 978-1786570321; £17.99
The High Atlas by Hamish Brown (April 2012); ISBN: 978-1852846718; £17.99.
Lonely Planet Moroccan Arabic Phrasebook (January 2008); ISBN: 978-1740591874, £4.99.

B is also for Boots. You will need to wear hiking boots during the trek so please ensure you have some well in advance of departure so you can break them in properly. A comfortable breathable pair (e.g. Gore-Tex or eVent) with a flexible Vibram sole (or similar) and good ankle support is best. Make sure you try on lots of pairs before you choose some. You are strongly recommended 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 one of the most difficult pieces of luggage to replace/hire at short notice.

B is also for Bottle. You will need a bottle to carry your own drinking water – around 2-3 litres per day. You must be prepared to carry this yourself throughout the day. Ideally you will bring a two-litre water container such as a CamelBak or Platypus hydration system (pictured) plus a one litre bottle as a backup. Please note, when shopping for a hydration system be wary of the cheaper alternatives to the CamelBak or Platypus brands, as they are notorious for leaking and experiencing valve problems. You must always test your hydration system well in advance of departure to ensure there are no problems. **See also D is for Dehydration and W is for Water.**

C is for Camping. During the trek you will stay in a tent (two people per tent) near Toubkal refuge at the base of Mount Toubkal for 2 nights. Tents and a sleeping mat are provided but you will need to bring your own sleeping bag with a *comfort rating* of at least 0°C.



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C is also for Clothing. Morocco is a traditional nation, clearly reflected in their dress. In Marrakech the local people are familiar with seeing 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 most parts of Morocco and men and women should do their best to keep these areas covered in Marrakech.

C is also for Clothing on the Trek. Please bring non-cotton technical clothing for optimum comfort and hygiene. Non-cotton garments (e.g. polyester, nylon, polypropylene, Merino wool etc.), wick sweat away from your skin leaving your clothing dry. Cotton clothing absorbs sweat and stays wet which will make you very cold, which can be dangerous in a mountain environment. Cotton clothes also get smelly fast whereas technical items can be worn for days on end without smelling. This in turn means you do not need to buy or pack as many items of clothing.

Sports clothes, clothes you wear to the gym or running gear is usually non-cotton so check what you have already before you go shopping! If you invest in a few key technical garments you can wear these for the entire trek.

During the day you may only need a lightweight top and trekking-trousers but you may need to add a warmer mid layer or fleece when you stop for lunch and during early morning summit attempt when the temperatures are lower. A loose fitting, long sleeved shirt or base layer is more practical than a short-sleeved t-shirt, as you can roll sleeves up and down as required but please use your own judgement and consider your preferences. It is cold at night so please bring warm layers for the evenings. See the packing list below for more details. You do not need to bring a clean outfit for each trek day; pack light!

C is also for Communications. There is a widely spread mobile phone network across the country and it is thus quite likely that your mobile phone will work. Mobiles phones work on some sections of the trek. Please contact your phone provider for details of roaming charges and remember to turn off data on your phone.

C is also for Culture Shock. Geographically Morocco is not far from Europe but some commonplace cultural differences can cause shock to the visitor. Haggling in the market place is expected, and prices are often twice as expensive as they are worth! In the market place you may be approached by people trying to get you to enter their shop to look around. If you are not interested, a firm 'no' should ensure you are left alone. **See B is for Begging, E is for Etiquette and H is for Haggling.**

D is for Daypack. Throughout the trek you will carry a daypack which will contain the essentials you will need during the trek day. Your main luggage is transported by mule. Things you will include in your daypack include: personal first aid kit, warm layer, sun cream, three litres of water, toilet paper, wet wipes and camera. On summit day you will also carry your own lunch. We recommend a 25-30 litre pack. It may weigh around 6-8kg when packed, so you must be prepared for this by carrying the equivalent during your training walks. Try on lots of daypacks before you buy and remember that it must have a hip belt and chest strap for optimum comfort and load bearing. Remember that you have to carry this yourself so please invest some time into finding a suitable, well-fitting daypack.



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D is also for Dehydration. Day time temperatures can rise to 30°C so you should consume at least 2 litres of water a day, plus soups, teas and coffees to avoid the risk of dehydration. You should also bring a supply of rehydration salts such as Dioralyte. It is worth considering bringing electrolyte tablets which you add to water to turn it into an isotonic sports drink that can help prevent dehydration by topping up the essential salts and sugars lost when you sweat. Recommended brands include Nuun or Zero and are available in a wide variety of flavours for around £6 for 12 tablets. While trekking, make sure you check the water level of your CamelBak hydration system at rest stops so you can monitor your intake, and remember that taking small regular sips is more efficient than taking large glugs. You will be provided with bottled mineral water. Tap water is not safe to drink. **See also W is for Water.**

D is also for Dietary Requirements. The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for if we are notified in advance. Dietary requirements or requests made during the trip will be accommodated if possible but cannot be guaranteed.

D is also for Discount. When you book a place on the challenge you will receive a discount voucher for Cotswold Outdoor (15%) for use online or in-store and Nomad Travel clinics (10%).

D is also for Drink. Mint tea is commonplace in many restaurants and you may find you will drink lots of this during the trek. You are provided with bottled mineral water during the trip. Bottled water and soft drinks may be available to buy along the way.

E is for Electricity. Two round prong plug sockets are standard in Morocco, so please take an appropriate European style adaptor. Electricity is 220V-240V.

E is also for Environment. The wonderful environment of the High Atlas is also a fragile one. We are environmentally conscious and aim to minimise our impact as much as possible to help protect and preserve this beautiful environment for future generations. 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.
- Be considerate of other trekkers.

E is also for Expenses. You will need to bring some money for personal expenditure whilst in Morocco such as drinks, souvenirs, guide/staff tips (approx. £20-30), laundry etc. There are lots of ATMs at the airport and in Marrakech if you wish to withdraw cash, but be aware that your bank may charge for overseas withdrawals and transactions and some banks block overseas transactions so inform your bank before departure. **See also M is for Money.**

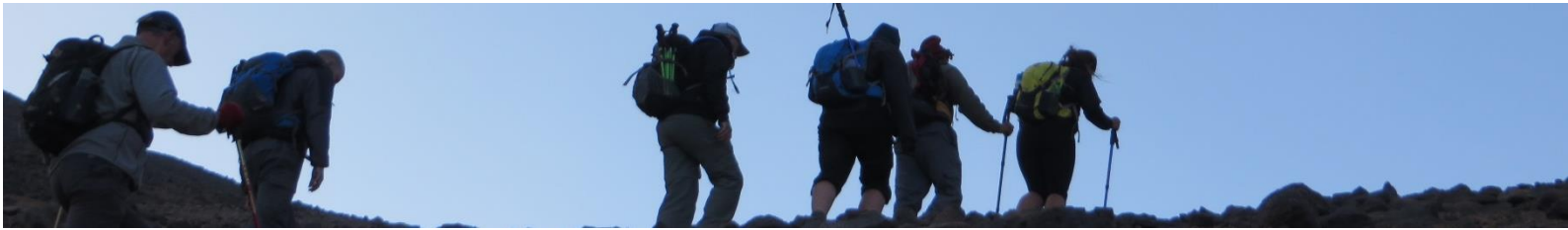
F is for First Aid kit. You should always have access to a small first aid kit of essential items which is for your own personal use. Your tour manager is not allowed to give you medication so you must ensure you have access to your own first aid kit in your daypack. Suggested items to include are: personal prescription medicine, painkillers, plasters, blister plasters, anti-histamine tablets, Imodium (Loperamide), rehydration sachets, lip balm with SPF, antiseptic cream, zinc oxide tape etc.



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F is also for Fitness. This tour is classified as challenging so a good general level of fitness is required. You cannot be too fit for this challenge so you should engage in fitness training before departure including walking, cardiovascular workouts and work to improve both your stamina and, critically, your ability to walk up and down gradients as there are steep ascents and descents. Regular breaks are taken, but long days walking are inevitable. Different Travel has the right to refuse anyone who they feel is not fit enough for the challenge to ensure the health and safety of the individual and the group.

H is for Haggling. When shopping for gifts in market places where there are no price tags on items it is expected that you will haggle. The first price is sometimes twice the value of the item, but remember that you should engage with the vendor to encourage rapport before haggling then only pay what you think is a good price for the item, not trying to get the price as low as possible.

H is also for Head Torch. This is an essential item for the trek. You will use it in the evening around camp and if you set off for the summit before dawn (or arrive into camp late) it is important for your safety. Petzl is one brand which makes good quality head torches but there are many options available if you shop around. Please ensure you take an LED torch, put fresh batteries in before departure, and bring some spare batteries.

H is also for Health. Different Travel regrets that we cannot provide advice on vaccinations. You **MUST** visit your GP or travel health professional at least 8 weeks before travelling to ensure your vaccinations are up to date. Different Travel and Nomad Travel Health Clinic

have teamed up to offer you a 10% discount on kit and vaccinations (discount code given on booking). For general information on vaccinations, visit

<http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>.

H is also for Hiking Poles. Many trekkers find trekking poles very useful as they take pressure off the knees and can make trekking easier; particularly on the scree slopes. You are advised to try them out first to see if you think they would suit you.

H is also for Hygiene. There are shower facilities at the hotel and guesthouse but there are no bathing facilities at camp. It is recommended that you bring a small pack of baby wipes however, during the trek you *may* be able to use the shower at Toubkal refuge (for a fee). You are recommended to bring environmentally friendly toiletries such as those available from Lush and The Body Shop. You will need to bring your own towel.

I is for Insect Repellent. There are many mosquitoes in Morocco so you are recommended to bring repellent with you. DEET is the most effective repellent available. The Department of Health recommends 50% is the maximum that you should use on your skin (never bring 100% DEET to use on your skin). DEET can melt plastic, stain clothes and remove dye so be careful when using any DEET product.



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I is also for Insurance. The Different Travel Company will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip; however unexpected things can occur such as your cancellation, delays, medical problems and baggage loss etc. Thus the purchase of travel insurance for our expeditions, such as a policy from Campbell Irvine, is mandatory. Travel insurance is a cost effective way to protect yourself and your equipment. **Please ensure that your policy covers trekking at altitudes up to 4,167m and emergency rescue.**

<http://www.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 to protect the loss of your registration fee as a result of cancellation due to injury, illness etc.

K is for Kit bag. You will need a trek kit bag which will contain your trek luggage such as your sleeping bag and spare clothes and will be carried by the mules. This can be a holdall, duffel bag or large rucksack. Do not bring a solid suitcase or holdall with wheels as your kit bag as this is not suitable. The total weight of your kit bag should not exceed 8kg as there are strict animal welfare policies. The size/capacity of the kit bag doesn't matter as long as all your trek kit fits inside. Most people will find 55-60 litres plenty.

L is for Language. Arabic and Berber are Morocco's official languages. French is a common second language among the urban educated classes. Spanish is spoken as a second language by residents in northern cities like Tangier and English is often a third language.

L is also for Luggage. Packing for an adventure travel trip is slightly different to packing for your usual holiday. For this challenge you will need the following 4 luggage items:

1. A small daypack 25-30 litres capacity which you carry yourself during the trek. This should have a hip belt and chest strap for optimal comfort. *See D is for Daypack.*
2. A kit bag or holdall for your trek luggage (max 8kg) which will be carried by mules. A suitcase is unsuitable. *See K is for Kit bag.*
3. A suitcase to hold your luggage (including your empty trek kit bag) for the flight. This can be left securely in Imlil with anything not required for the trek (e.g. toiletries, hair straighteners etc.).
4. Some combination padlocks to secure your luggage.

M is for Money. The currency of Morocco is the dirham (Dh). At the time of writing there were 12 Dirham to the Pound (November 2018). You cannot buy Dirhams in the UK but there are ATMs in Marrakech where you can withdraw cash. You must bring enough money for the entire trip with you from Marrakech as there is no ATM in Imlil. £100 (around 1500 Dirhams) should suffice depending on how many drinks and souvenirs you wish to buy! If you prefer to exchange cash you are recommended to take Sterling and change it to Dirhams. Euros and US\$ may be accepted for payment although using local currency often means a better bargain at the market! Don't change Pounds to another currency and then to Dirhams as you will lose out twice!



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M is also for Mule welfare. Pack mules will carry your gear to camp for you and there are several things you can do as a traveller to ensure the welfare of the mules. The maximum weight limit for a pack mule is 50kg and as the saddle weighs around 20kg in itself we ask you to pack as lightly as possible, ideally 8kg kit bag per trekker; with absolutely no more than a 10kg, which is a very generous kit allowance. Ensure your tip to the local staff includes a proportion to go to the muleteer for the mule's care and food provisions. If you wish to offer a further tip for the mule's care, this is to your discretion.

N is for Nibbles. You may wish to bring a selection of snacks and nibbles for your trek. Don't forget to bring salty snacks as well as sweet to keep your electrolytes topped up. Some people bring Jelly Babies, Haribo, dried fruit, salted nuts, energy bars, Kendal mint cake, flapjacks, Peperami, Mr Kipling individually wrapped cake slices etc. Please only bring snacks you enjoy eating; if you don't like them at home, you won't like them while you're trekking.

P is also for Photocopies. Before departure, make sure you photocopy all the documents you are taking with you (passport, credit/debit cards, passport photos, driving licence etc.) then pack one copy (separate from the originals) and leave another with a reliable person at home. You should also scan and email these documents to yourself so you have a copy available online if you lose anything.

P is also for Photography. When taking photographs of the local people, it is polite to first ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission – especially in rural areas can cause offence. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome.

P is also for Poverty. Although you may not come into contact with many instances of this, you may come across beggars and homeless people which can be distressing. It is important not to underestimate the psychological impact of viewing poverty, and a sense of helplessness and guilt that often comes from it. Some people respond by feeling they must do everything they can to help everyone. The risk is that it leads to disappointment and disillusionment as no one person can do everything. The secret is to recognise the signs (raised levels of stress, feeling emotional, guilty, frustrated and angry), and to set realistic goals about what you can and cannot do. We also recommend that you avoid acting on impulse – especially when it comes to giving away money. People may seem genuine, but very many people still regard tourists as 'cash cows' and act dishonestly and unethically. Do check with your guides before giving money.

R is for 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 1 per cent of the population is Christian, and less than 0.2 per cent is Jewish.



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S is for Sleeping bag. You should bring a sleeping bag which should have a comfort rating of 0°C or lower. You will not carry your sleeping bag yourself during the trek. Please note that a sleeping bag comfort rating is NOT the same as the extreme rating. The European standard for sleeping bags measures four temperature ratings:

- Comfort — the temperature at which a standard woman can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed position.
- Lower Limit — the temperature at which a standard man can sleep for eight hours in a curled position without waking.
- Extreme — the minimum temperature at which a standard woman can remain for six hours without risk of death from hypothermia.

Sleeping bags with a comfort of 0°C -3°C:

Snugpak Tactical 2 (comfort 0°C, £129.95);
Snugpak Softie 6 Twilight (comfort 0°C £114.95);
Snugpak 'The Sleeping Bag' (comfort -2°C, £34.95);
Snugpak Travelpak 3 (comfort -3°C, £54.95);
Snugpak 'The Navigator' (comfort -2°C, £34.95);
Robens Caucasus 600 (comfort 0°C £160);
Ayacucho Sirius 200 (comfort 0°C £80);
Women's Starlight II Regular (comfort -2°C £100)
Mountain Hardwear Lamina 20 (comfort -2°C £135);
Haglofs Slumber 2S (comfort 0° C, lower limit -5° C, £110) ...and many more.

S is also for Sleeping bag liner. A silk or cotton liner is highly recommended as it adds an extra layer of insulation to your sleeping bag but also helps to keep it clean from sweat and dirt. You sweat around 300ml in a sleeping bag each night and without a liner this will absorb into your sleeping bag and will get very smelly. It is also handy to have if you get too hot at night and unzip your sleeping bag but want to be covered by something.

S is also for Sleeping mat. A 4cm compressed foam mat is provided for you.

S is also for Socks. It is important that the socks you choose are of good quality, non-cotton and will not slip down or sag in your boots which is one of the main causes of blisters. Check the labels on the packaging to ensure there is no cotton in the socks. During your trek you will be wearing your breathable boots and so you should wear socks to complement these. Cotton socks absorb sweat and hinder its evaporation, making them damp and therefore likely to rub against your feet, causing blisters. Socks containing Coolmax (a brand of polyester), nylon, or Merino wool all have wicking properties. This means that instead of the fabric absorbing sweat, it pulls it away from the skin for it to evaporate. Socks like this complement the breathability of your boots, and your feet will stay cool and you will avoid blisters.

S is also for Souvenirs. Morocco provides splendid opportunities for the shopper especially for spices, tea, cook wear, carpets, decorative dinner sets, handicrafts in all types of medium, paintings and much more.

T is for Tickets (or e-tickets). These will be sent to you 2 weeks before departure.



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T is also for Tipping. Giving a tip to the local staff is appreciated, and a combined tip for the guide, cooks and camel handlers is given at the end of the trek. Around £25-30 per person is a guideline but please discuss this with your tour manager and the group to decide on an appropriate amount.

T is also for Toilets. At the hotels the toilets will be Western style. There are some toilets at the Toubkal refuge which are basic, shared and mostly squat toilets that usually flush. During the trek your support crew will dig a hole in the ground near your campsite and cover with a privacy tent. You will need to bring your own toilet paper as this is not provided. If you wish to use the toilet during the days on the trail, you will need to find a bush/rock as there are no toilet facilities along the trail. Please do not dispose of toilet paper on the mountain; please put it in a nappy bag and dispose of it properly.

W is for Water. All tap water in Morocco is unsafe to drink. You should only use bottled or purified water to drink, and to brush your teeth or rinse your mouth.

Bottled mineral water is provided for you but you may prefer to bring water purification so you can refill your water bottles. A highly recommended purification is 'Biox Aqua' tablets. You may also wish to consider powdered fruit juice or electrolyte tablets, as this will make the purified water taste better.

See B is for Bottle and D is for Dehydration.

W is also for Weather. The expected conditions are dry and hot days (around 26°C average, with highs of 33°C) and cold nights (down to around 5°C). As you ascend, the temperature will drop.

If snow remains on the higher slopes of Toubkal, and if conditions require it, you may need to use crampons (which can be hired in Imlil if required – approx. €5 per day). It is unlikely that snow will fall during the trek, however it is not impossible.

Although the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate, climate change can impact the seasons, so you may experience uncharacteristic conditions during the trip which are out of our control. Should this happen the guide will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and ultimately the safety of the group as a whole.

Z is for Zinc Oxide tape. When your boots start to rub against your feet, you can apply zinc oxide tape to the hot spot to stop a blister developing. Prevention is better than cure!

Last updated November 2018