

# Sahara Desert Trek

Information Pack

23rd - 28th  
April 2020

Trek the Sahara for Helen & Douglas House. Challenge yourself in scorching temperatures, face mighty sand dunes and camp under the stars.

"Unforgettable."

"The desert  
experience  
was amazing."



Helen & Douglas House  
hospice care for children

This trip is operated by The Different Travel Company (ATOL 6706) for Helen & Douglas House (Registered Charity no.1085951). All the flights in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate](http://www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate).



## **Helen & Douglas House Sahara Desert Trek**

23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020



### **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 makes Morocco an adventure lover's paradise, and Marrakech is a wonderful place to visit before or after the trek with a mixture of spicy aromas, peaceful mosques, diverse entertainers and a cacophony of merchants in the bustling medina.



### **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. Today most Berber people live in Algeria and Morocco although there are also Berber communities in Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Before Islam most Berbers were Christians, now the majority are Sunni Muslim. 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.



### **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. There are also a number of animals and many species of bird that make the desert their home.



## Trek Overview

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.

## 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 an team of support staff including cooks and camel handlers, a Different Travel Company UK tour manager and a Helen & Douglas House representative.

## What is the terrain like?

It's not just sand! The terrain is a mixture of hard, flat sundried plains, dried up ancient river beds, wide sandy dune fields and hard rocky outcrops.

## What is the climate like?

Temperatures tend to range from approx. 30°C to 40°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 for this time of year 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 ultimately safety of the group as a whole.

## 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's the daily routine like?

Each day's trek will vary in duration but on average you will trek for 5-8 hours per day, covering approximately 15-20km, with a long break at lunchtime when you will spend a few hours relaxing through the heat of the day in the desert environment.

## Where will we sleep?

During the trek you will sleep in tents which are provided (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.



## What about bathroom facilities?

Toilet facilities consist of a small toilet 'tent' covering a hole in the ground. There are no showers or bathing facilities so you must ensure you bring a pack of baby wipes.

## What is the food like?

Meals are cooked by your trek chef who will prepare hearty, delicious Moroccan meals that will keep your energy levels high for each day's trek. Breakfast and lunch will be taken alfresco, and evening meals will be taken in a mess tent at camp. Plates, mugs, cutlery and other equipment are provided for you.



## Who can take part?

You must be 18+ to participate on this trek unaccompanied. 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.



## How should I train?

If you do not already regularly exercise it is crucial that you start training before departure to ensure your best chance of enjoyment on the trip. The best training is walking long distances over hilly terrain while wearing the boots and carrying the backpack you will use in the desert. Increasing your cardiovascular endurance, core strength and leg strength will also benefit you greatly so resistance workouts should be added to your training regime in addition to plenty of hill walking. You can download a number of free apps which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MapMyWalk, couch to 5k, MyFitnessPal etc. If you attempt to complete the challenge without training it will make the trek unnecessarily difficult and may hinder your experience, and the experience of your team mates.

# Sahara Desert Trek 2020



## How tough is it?

The trek is rated moderately challenging for someone of a good fitness level. The terrain is generally flat with sand dunes representing the biggest variation in gradient; however the temperatures pose a specific challenge with temperatures historically reaching 40°C. You are advised to be of a good fitness level before departure to ensure fast recovery from each day's exertions.

## Medical Declaration

A medical form must be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues **must** be noted and (if relevant) signed by your GP.

## Trip cost:

£285 registration fee + £1,400 fundraising target for Helen & Douglas House.

*(fundraising must be achieved by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020).*

**What is included?** Return flights from London (inc. current taxes and fuel surcharges), all transfers and transport in Morocco, accommodation in hotels (2 nights), tents and sleeping mats on trek (3 nights), all meals as specified, local guides, support staff, camels and camel handlers on trek, Different Travel UK tour manager and Helen & Douglas House representative.

**Trip Does Not Include:** Personal expenses e.g. drinks, souvenirs etc., any vaccinations required, travel insurance, tips (around £20-30pp) and personal trekking kit.

## Is the trip ATOL protected?

Helen & Douglas House is acting as agent for The Different Travel Company, ATOL 6706. The flight-inclusive trip in this brochure is financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay your registration fee you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate and ATOL Confirmation Invoice. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to:

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## How will I fundraise the £1,400 required?

Most people find that this is far easier than they imagined, and we will give you as much support as you need to reach, and even exceed your target!

Each participant will be allocated a Helen & Douglas House fundraising staff member who will meet with you and help you to create your fundraising plan. Materials such as collection buckets and tins, sponsorship forms, email banners, balloons and banners can also be provided to help you achieve your target.

Here are some suggestions for how you could meet (and actually exceed!) your fundraising target:

- Ten supermarket bag packs: **£500**
- Car boot sale/ eBay auction: **£150**
- Three quiz nights: **£300**
- Sponsorship: **£300**
- Host a party; charge £10 entry: **£200**
- Ask five friends or family to raise £50 each: **£250**
- Karaoke night: **£350**
- Ten cake sales: **£200**

**Total £2,250 (target exceeded!)**



## How do I sign up?

Complete the booking form and email it to [info@different-travel.com](mailto:info@different-travel.com) with a photo of your passport data page.

You will receive an invoice by email with details of how to pay your registration fee.

*Please add @different-travel.com to your safe sender list and check your junk mail folder regularly to avoid missing important correspondence and updates.*

Once your place is confirmed you will receive a confirmation email with a full trip dossier and kit list, discount vouchers, fitness training guide, a fundraising pack and much more!

## Itinerary

### Day 1 (Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020): London to 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 instead (approx. 4-5 hours).



**Day 2 (Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020): Marrakech to Sahara** If staying in Marrakech we set off early, crossing the Atlas Mountains and following ancient caravan routes into the arid Sahara desert, stopping for lunch in Ouarzazate on the way (journey time approx. 9 hours including stops.) If starting in Ouarzazate the journey 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 into the vast and arid Sahara desert, stopping overnight to camp under the stars of the Sahara.

Approx. trek distance: 5km.

### Days 3 – 4 (Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020): Sahara Desert

Our trek continues through the desert as we traverse sand dunes and rocky, lunar landscapes for the next three 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.

### Day 5 (Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020): Sahara to Oulad Driss to Marrakech

This morning it's the final leg of the trek back to the village where we bid farewell to the trekking team and head back to Marrakech (approx. 9 hours' drive). Enjoy a farewell dinner tonight and overnight stay at a central hotel. Approx. trek distance: 5km.



### Day 6 (Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020): Marrakech to London

Enjoy some free time to explore the exotic city of Marrakech before your flight back to the London (subject to flight times).

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.