

# THE MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL

FOREIGN TREK 1992 MOROCCO

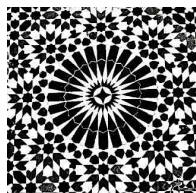
Marrakech and the High Atlas



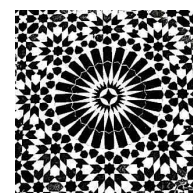
The visit to the Koranic School in Marrakech



The party on the summit of Trek's first ever 4000 m peak, Iferrouane



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Title page image: The party on the summit of Trek's first ever 4000 m peak, Iferouane  
Standing, left to right: Robin, Nick Hughes, Mike Devine, Mike, Carl Mitchell, Christopher Willson  
Steven Billington, Graham Seel  
Middle: Grant Mitchell, William Ashley  
In front, left to right: Simon Duffy, Nick Gartside, Spencer Groves, Edward Godwin, Stuart Kistruck

I originally word-processed the text of this log in the autumn of 1992 on an Apple LCII using ClarisWorks. The first 55-page edition of the printed log had a small selection of thirty-two 6" by 4" prints stuck onto pages amongst the text before photocopying in black and white and binding in a booklet. That version was distributed at the time to those who wanted a copy, and there is a copy in the Trek Archive.

I completed this version with colour images and a digital sketch map and various appendices in 2018 using an Apple Macintosh and Microsoft Word, with iPhoto and Preview to edit the images. The main text remains identical, but I have rearranged it to accommodate more images. I scanned the majority of images from 35 mm slides taken for the Trek Reunion in November 1992, with a small number scanned from prints. There remains a mis-match in colour balance between slides and prints.

To keep the overall file size down, all the images are low resolution but of sufficient quality to display fairly well at A4 page size. The average size of the 164 images used is about 58 kB, giving an overall file size of about 12.1 MB, about the size 4 medium compact digital camera images. A video camera was bought and the recording was edited and transferred to VHS tape to be displayed along with the slide show.

After such a long time it has obviously been impossible to obtain permission from individuals to use images which include them. Anyone who finds this a problem should contact me.

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*In July 1992 a party of twenty boys and four staff went on the first MGS Trek to Africa, to Marrakech and the Atlas mountains of Morocco. We flew to Agadir then travelled overland to Marrakech where we spent a day at each end of our 11-day Trek through the High Atlas.*

**MGS LEADER** Allan Witton

**MGS STAFF** Adrian Dobson Simon Duffy Graham Seel

## TREKKERS

Tent	Leader	Members	(* denotes a previous Foreign Trek)	
1	Philip Crosbie (7Ba) *	Robert Hempstock (7Av)	Mark Bentley (6Bm)	David Owen (6Bm)
2	Nick Gartside (6As) **	Grant Mitchell (7Mb) *	Spencer Groves (6As)	Edward Godwin (6As)
3	William Manning (6Mb) **	James Marks (6Ma) **	Roger Naylor (6Mb)	Nick Hughes (6Mb)
4	Martin Beastall (5R)	Carl Mitchell (5R)	Douglas Dawson (5T)	William Ashley (5S)
5	Christopher Willson (5E) *	Stuart Kistruck (5X)	Steven Billington (4E)	Michael Devine (4K)
(20 trekkers)				

<b>IN MOROCCO</b>	Mike Wynne	Planning and organisation
	Robin	Mike's assistant
	Lahcen	Arrangements in Aroumd
	Mohammed	Guide
	Brahim	Head cook
	Lahcen	Assistant head cook
	8 muleteers	

**DATES** Thursday 2nd July to Thursday 16th July (15 days)

**COST** £510



Adrian Dobson, Simon Duffy, Allan Witton and Graham Seel at the house in Aroumd, with Toubkal on the skyline



## TENT GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS



TENT 1: Philip Crosbie, Mark Bentley, David Owen, Robert Hempstock relaxing at Taloutoult



TENT 2: from top Grant Mitchell, Edward Godwin, Nick Gartside, Spencer Groves on Iferouane



TENT 3: Nick Hughes, William Manning, Roger Naylor, James Marks on Tizi n'Tadat



TENT 4: Carl Mitchell, Douglas Dawson, William Ashley, Martin Beastall at the Tazaghart hut

### Apologies to Tent 5:

Christopher Willson  
Stuart Kistruck  
Steven Billington  
Michael Devine

for having no Group photo of them.

They do all appear on the group photo on the summit of Iferouane on the title page.





Mike Wynne



The Koranic School



The summit party on Tanamrout, with Toubkal and Ouanoukrim on the skyline

## THE WALKING ROUTE

The walking route was an 11-day circuit of the Toubkal area of the High Atlas range, with an ascent of Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak, as a climax. The first three days took us east from Aroumd through the Berber villages of Tamatert, Ouaneskra, Tacheddîrt, Oukaimeden and Agounss to Tiourdiou in the Ourika valley, each day crossing a col from which we made an easy summit ascent. Walking through these villages gave us a fascinating insight into the primitive and traditional existence of these mountain people.

We then followed the Tinzer river through the Kassaria gorge to Taloutoult in the upper Tinzer basin, from where half the party continued along the valley while the other half made the long traverse of the Iferouane ridge. After a long descent to Amsouzart on the Saharan side of the range and a bivouac at Lac d'Ifni we crossed Tizi n'Ouanoums to camp for three nights by the Toubkal hut in the upper Mizane valley.

The seven-day approach walk had developed fitness and helped acclimatisation and the ascents of Toubkal and Ouanoukrim were accomplished with ease, and half the party bivouacked on Toubkal's summit. We returned to Aroumd via a steep scramble over Tizi n'Tadat into the Ouarzane valley for a bivouac at Tamsoult and then over Tizi Mzik.



## OUTLINE ITINERARY AND WALKING ROUTE SUMMARY

15 days		2 + 2 half days travel		no free days		11+ 2 half days walking				
July		All heights in m	Height m	Distance km	Ascent m	Daily totals				Naismith
						km	Ascent	Descent	Time	
2	Travel	Manchester > London > Agadir > Marrakech								
3	Trek									
	Minibus	Imlil	1770							
	Trek	Around	1950			2	180	--	60	45
4	Trek	Ouaneskra	2175	9	420					
	Excursion	Tanamrout (east)	2630	2	350	11	770	550	3-50	3-30
5	Trek	Oukaïmeden	2580							
	via	Jbel Oukaïmeden	3273			12	1330	930	4-15	4-40
6	Trek	Tiourdiou	1800	15	590					
	Excursion	Jbel Attar	3267	1	170	16	760	1540	4-50	4-30
7	Trek	Taloutoult	2450			11	800	150	4-20	3-30
8	Trek	Ouraine [Valley route	3000			11	600]			
	or via	Iferouane	4000			17	1750	1200	5-15	6-20
9	Trek	Lac d'Ifni	2312							
	via	Tizi n'Ouraine	3120			16	950	1640	4-10	4-50
10	Trek	Toubkal hut	3200							
	via	Tizi n'Ouanoums	3664			9	1370	480	3-30	4-10
11	Excursion	Toubkal	4167			6	980	980	3-10	2-50
		from Toubkal hut	3200							
12	Excursion	Ouanoukrim	4088			9	970	970	3-30	3-30
		from Toubkal hut	3200							
13	Trek	Tamsoult	2275							
	via	Tizi n'Tadat	3740			8	570	1500	3-50	2-30
14	Trek	Around	1950			11	400	730	2-45	2-50
15	Trek	Imlil	1770			2	--	180	30	30
	Minibus	Marrakech								
16	Travel	Marrakech > Manchester			Naismith daily average (11 Trek days)					3h-55

	Distance	Ascent	Descent	Time
<b>Grand Totals:</b>	<b>130 km</b>	<b>10,850 m</b>	<b>10,850 m</b>	<b>45 hours</b>
(All 13 days walking)	<b>81 miles</b>	<b>35,600 ft</b>	<b>35,600 ft</b>	
<b>Daily average:</b>	<b>11.5 km</b>	<b>970 m</b>	<b>970 m</b>	<b>4h-00</b>
(excluding 3rd & 15th)	<b>7.2 miles</b>	<b>3180 ft</b>	<b>3180 ft</b>	

A Trek is a walk from one campsite to the next.

An Excursion is a return walk.

[ ] Shorter alternative route.

**Toubkal** Summits are in bold.

**2175** Heights of camps are in blue.

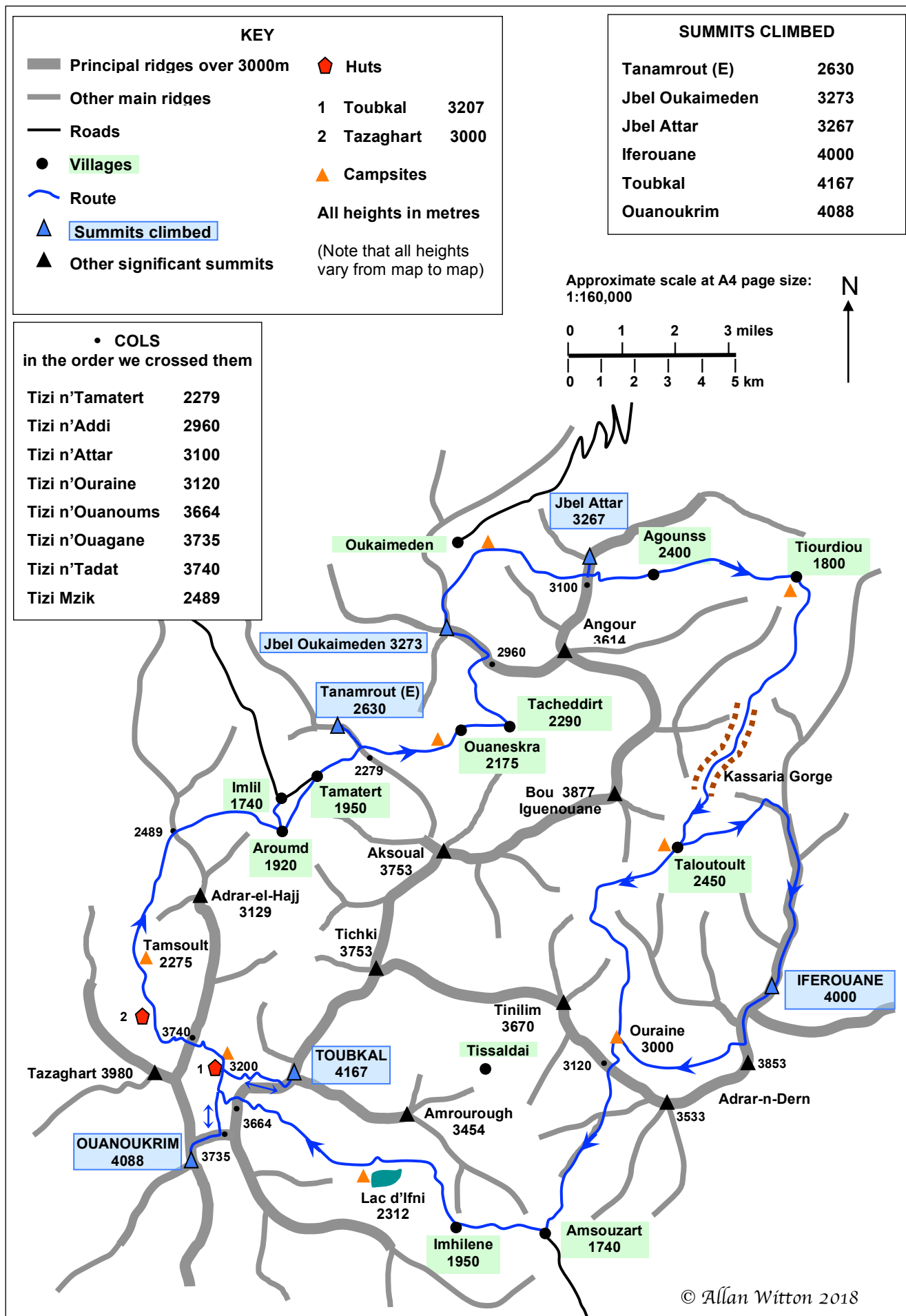
Tizi is a mountain pass.

Naismith Times according to Naismith's Rule: 12 min/km and 10 metres/min for ascent.

Given that we were carrying just light day sacks and were on good mule trails for most of the route, it isn't surprising that our average walking time was close to Naismith's.



## SKETCH MAP OF THE ROUTE





## MAPS

	Scale	Sheet
Carte du Maroc	1:100,000	Oukaïmeden - Toubkal
	1:50,000	Toubkal

The 1:100,000 map has relief shading which makes it much easier to read and gives a better overall impression of the ridge and valley systems. Most of the main paths are marked, together with villages and summits, but crags are almost entirely absent, giving a false impression of rounded ridges even where there are huge cliffs.

In contrast the 1:50,000 map has no relief shading and a plethora of crags marked, which make it difficult to read until the lie of the land is familiar. It marks many more paths than the 1:100,000 map and in general has more accurate details, but there were several places where the path on the ground was significantly different from that shown on the map.

We also obtained from the Royal Geographical Society some photocopies of two sheets of a 1932 survey of the Toubkal area at 1:20,000, and although they had more detail, they weren't very clear and we didn't find any need for them. Indeed, with Mohammed leading, maps weren't needed at all for route finding.

For various reasons, including the fact that the Berbers have no written language, place names in the Atlas have a variety of spellings which are not consistent between different maps and guides. However, variations are not usually so dissimilar as to cause confusion. Heights of villages, passes and summits also vary from map to map. The heights used in this report are generally taken from the 1:50,000 map as this is considered to be more reliable.

## GUIDES

<b>The Atlas Mountains - A Walkers' Guide</b>	Karl Smith	Cicerone	1989
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This contains a brief introduction to Morocco, and useful details of walks in several areas, including the Toubkal region. Well illustrated.

<b>Atlas Mountains Morocco</b>	Robin G Collomb	West Col	1987
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This includes some interesting background on Morocco as well as comprehensive details of walks principally in the Toubkal area.

<b>Great Atlas Traverse Morocco (Volume 1)</b>	Michael Peyron	West Col	1989
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This is a guide to a long-distance walk through the Atlas which passes through the area where we trekked. The book also includes a useful section on excursions in the Toubkal area.

<b>The Berbers of Morocco</b>	Alan Keohane	Hamish Hamilton	1991
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This is a lavishly illustrated account of the Berbers, and their lifestyle in the mountains.

<b>Morocco - A Cadogan Guide</b>	Banaby Rogerson	Cadogan	1989
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This is a comprehensive tome detailing all sorts of aspects of Morocco and Moroccan life.

## WALKING TIMES

Each walking day the following itinerary includes a summary table of times taken (in hours and minutes) between points along the route, together with the cumulative time. These are times spent on the move and exclude stops. The time given in brackets is the total time between the start and the end of the day's walking. A 'leg' is normally about 50 minutes walking (followed by a break of about 10-15 minutes), though this varied considerably this year, with Mohammed usually calling rather more frequent stops on the long ascents. The distance walked and height climbed each day include any optional excursions.

## ITINERARY

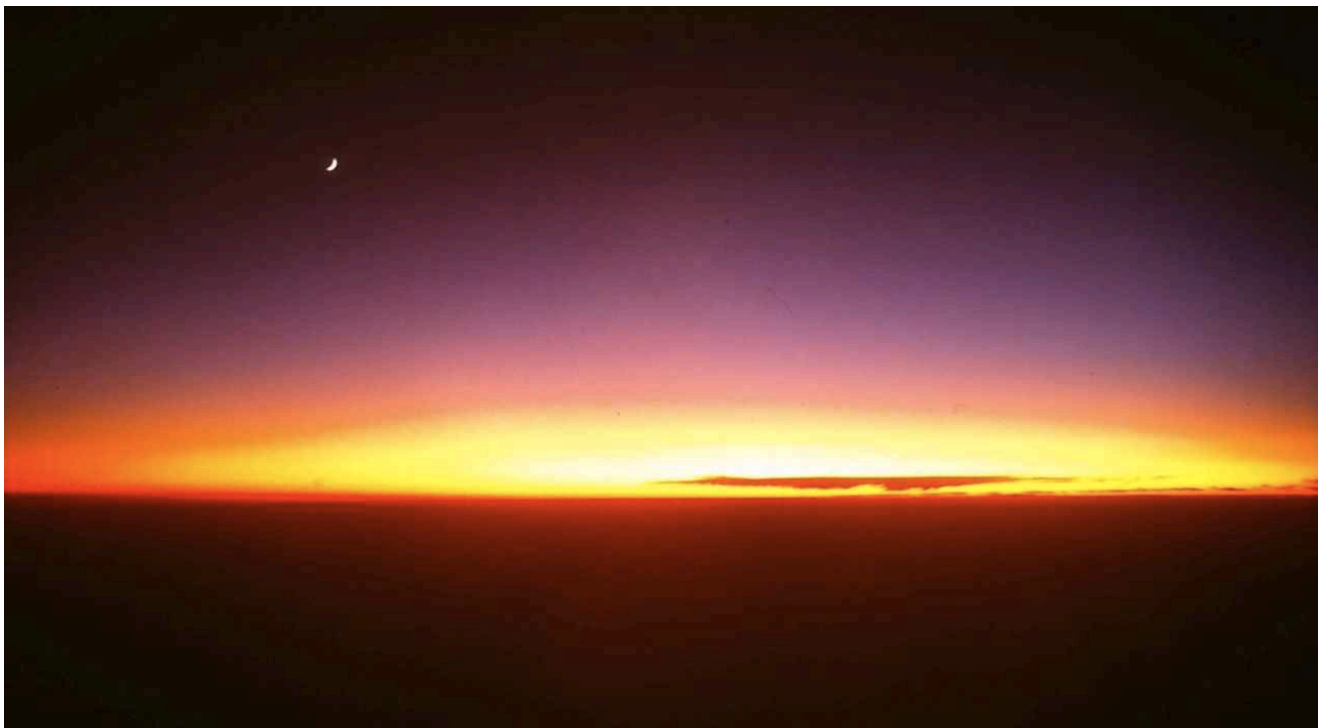
Thursday 2nd July	Travel	Manchester > Marrakech
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We were all assembled at Piccadilly station by 9.45 to begin our 2000-mile journey by catching the 10.30 train to Euston. Mike had gone to Morocco on the previous Monday to finalise details of the organisation there, and had asked us to carry out with us about 80 kg of food.

With 4 kg of this in everybody's kit-bag together with a full rucksack, hand luggage, and, for tent leaders, a whole tent as well, it was hard work negotiating the Underground, but we arrived at Heathrow Terminal 2 ahead of schedule. Our total baggage probably averaged more than the 20 kg per person allowance, but it didn't matter as we were told at check-in that Royal Air Maroc had increased it to 30 kg and we were well within that. The flight was delayed for an hour and we didn't take off until 6.10 p.m. We were originally scheduled to fly directly to Marrakech, but the airline changed the Thursday flight to Agadir a few weeks before departure.

The flight was smooth, the meal very good, and before we realised it we were flying in low over the Straits of Gibraltar to clear the sand dunes and touch down at Tangier airport at 8.30 (7.30 local time) just as dusk began to fall.

Tangier airport is little more than a runway and a cluster of small buildings, surrounded by surprisingly green and rolling countryside. The majority of passengers disembarked, leaving just a dozen passengers plus the MGS party to make the hour's onward flight to Agadir. As we flew high above the Moroccan coastline a brilliant new moon shone above the fiery glow of a sunset over the Atlantic, and when we touched down it was completely dark. We had made up time on the flight and during the stop at Tangier and arrived at 9.15, just 15 minutes behind schedule.



Agadir airport's terminal building is a huge, modern and spacious edifice built in Moroccan style and was deserted but for the officials and the few passengers from our flight. We passed through the formalities without difficulties and found Mike and Robin waiting for us with three minibuses and their drivers. Luggage was soon strapped onto the roof racks and we set off for the four-hour journey through the night to Marrakech.

Once away from Agadir a well-made but winding road took us over the western Atlas and down on to the northern plain during which snatches of sleep were punctuated by glaring headlights of traffic (almost entirely lorries) coming the other way. We had a break about half-way at the Moroccan equivalent of a transport café (but rather smarter) for our first mint tea and a chance to stretch our legs.

We arrived at the Hotel de Foucauld just after 2 a.m. to be welcomed with a deliciously cold and refreshing glass of freshly squeezed orange juice, after which we all promptly retired to our rooms with a bottle of mineral water for brushing teeth (the mains water is lethal!) and fell into bed. Even at that hour the streets outside the hotel were alive with activity and we fell asleep to the sound of horses clip-clopping along the road, the wail of prayer from a nearby mosque, and the pervasive whine of mopeds.



Friday 3rd July	Tour Minibus Trek	Marrakech Imlil Around	1950
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The Hotel de Foucauld looks a drab place from the outside, with its dull-orange, rendered walls fronting directly onto a grubby pavement and a busy main road, but inside it is well appointed. The bedrooms for two or three people are plainly furnished but, with en-suite facilities, are comfortable enough. Through the small and cramped reception area is the large and impressive dining room with a high ceiling, intricately carved plasterwork and wall hangings giving it an air of grandeur. The roof terrace offers a good panorama over the teeming streets of the city and a fine view of the nearby 12th century Koutoubia minaret, but as is usual in summer, the Atlas were obscured by heat haze.

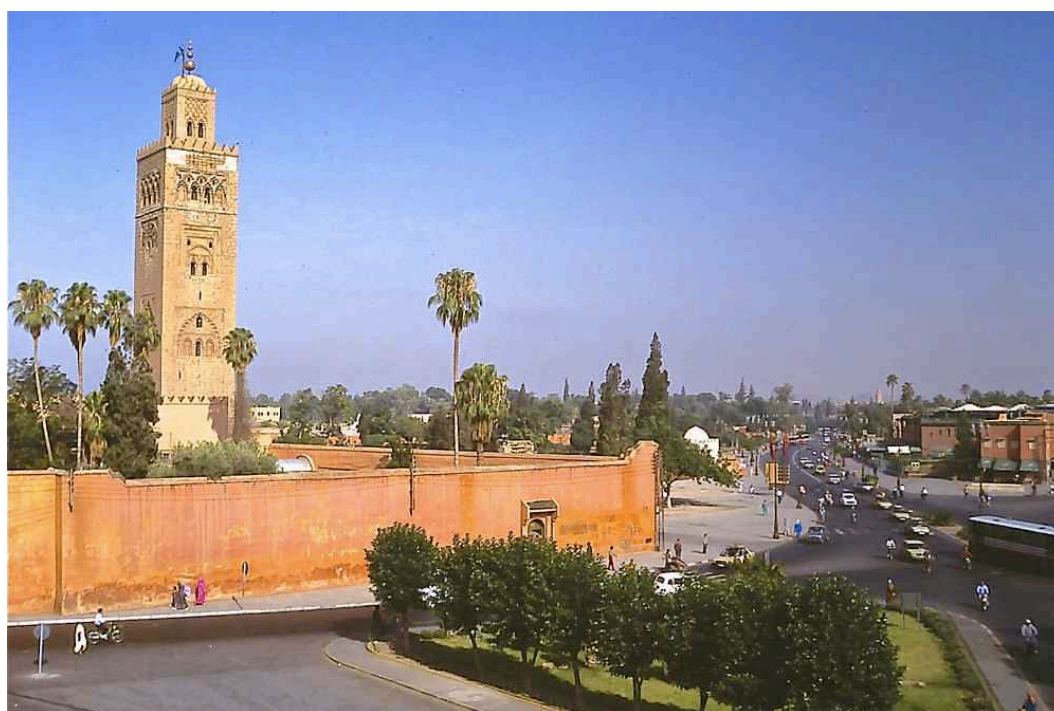
After a bleary-eyed breakfast we stepped out into the heat of the street and onto our horse-drawn carriages for the first part of our tour of the old city. As we made our way through the maze of streets we began to see for ourselves what a fascinating city of contrasts Marrakech is. The streets are teeming with pedestrians, from beggars in rags to women in traditional attire and others smartly dressed in western clothes, and traffic ranges from hand-drawn carts and pack-mules to Mercedes cars, with mopeds buzzing in and out of it all, creating an overall air of dusty frenzy.



The front of the Hotel de Foucauld



Breakfast



Koutoubia minaret from the hotel roof



Shortly we pulled up in a small square outside the Saadian Tombs to take a guided tour round the interior. As soon as we stepped off the carriages we were surrounded by street traders determined to sell us their wares ranging from film and camera batteries to souvenirs such as knives, jewellery, blankets and jellabas.

It seemed that if someone had wanted an ivory-handled corkscrew or a pair of Levi jeans, it would have been produced and offered 'at a good price'. Whatever one was tempted to buy, water from the water-seller dressed in traditional costume wasn't on the list!



Inside was a cool and tranquil haven from the rush and bustle outside as we walked amongst the gardens and hedges to view the exquisite temples where the Saadian imperial family lies buried. The architecture decorated with marble, glazed tiles, giltwork and finely carved wood and plaster was most impressive, and a vivid contrast with the dull red functional buildings outside.



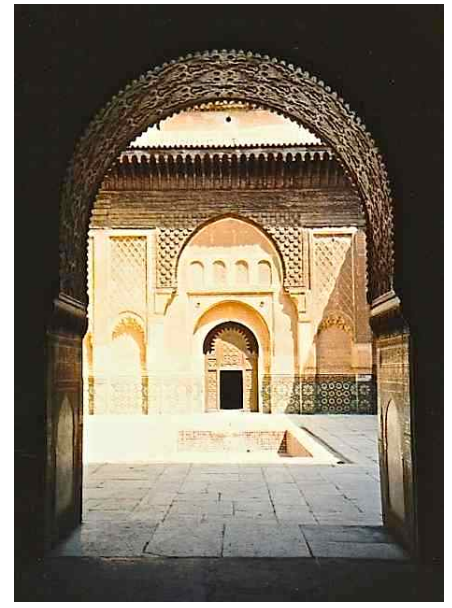
Back on the carriages we were about to move off when a man trying to sell jellabas made his final sales pitch (with his lowest price) and Adrian took the bait (and the jellaba). We were then taken through the city walls and on a long ride outside the ramparts to the north of the medina. Here we left the carriages to follow our guide on foot back to the hotel through the souks.

First we walked through an area of open-air tanneries, a revolting place of squalor, vile smells and filthy children persistently demanding money and attempting to pick our pockets. It wasn't somewhere to linger or take photographs.

Once in the souks we were again subjected to high pressure sales pitches in a two pronged attack. First there were the street traders carrying their wares (jewellery, knives, scarves etc.) who followed us and tried to engage us in conversation "Look....very nice..... good price.....you try" and place things in our hands or round our necks. Then there were the shop keepers trying to tempt us inside with a very similar sales technique. Any acknowledgment of their presence, interest in what they were selling or mere hesitation only encouraged them into greater fervour, so we marched briskly through the alleys trying to take it all in without being waylaid or 'picked off' from the back of the group.



We first stopped to look round an old Koranic school, the Islamic equivalent of a monastery and now no longer in use. It is a beautiful building of pillars and arches and intricately decorated walls, with passageways and stairs connecting the small rooms built round a large open courtyard.



The Koranic School

Our guide then took us to a spice and perfume 'emporium' where we were told in quite good English about the goods on offer and allowed to sniff the jars and sample the perfumes. Although obviously on the 'tourist trail' it was an Aladdin's cave with hundreds of jars on shelves around the room and it was a fascinating experience for the eye and the nose, and most of us bought our first presents to take home.



The spice and perfume emporium

After running the gauntlet of the street traders again we were taken to a large carpet 'factory-shop'. The 'factory' section consisted of an old man sitting cross-legged on the floor of a corridor spinning woollen yarn with the aid of a contraption made from an old bicycle wheel, and two other men weaving blankets on hand looms. It was all amazingly primitive.

A large hall with carpets hanging from the walls and huge piles of carpets and blankets all around was the main 'showroom'. With a captive audience the initial sales patter wasn't so high pressure. We sat cross-legged round the edge of the room and drank mint tea (a sweetener in more ways than one) and were greatly entertained by the friendly patter of the salesman as carpets and blankets were unfolded and laid out before us for approval. "The more you try, the more you get! The more you wash it the more you like it! You say which you like and I give you a democratic price!". Items that anyone might be interested in buying were put on one side and when everyone had seen enough the haggling began.



This was conducted individually between one of the salesmen and the prospective customer and began by the seller naming a price which was about five times what the article was reasonably worth. The purchaser then gasps in horror and says this is far too expensive and offers to buy it at about a quarter of what he is eventually prepared to pay.

By alternating amendments to the offer and the bid the theory is that a mutually agreeable price is reached.



But the trick is to be careful not to increase the bid price at the same rate as the offer price falls, otherwise one ends up paying more than one was initially prepared to. How low the offer price comes really depends on how long you are prepared to haggle, and to get the best deal of all the technique is to decide not to buy and begin to leave. The seller will do almost anything to tempt an interested customer not to go away without a purchase. Those of us interested in making a purchase did our haggling and although some felt they had paid over the odds, most of us came away feeling we had struck a reasonable bargain for our carpets, blankets, woollen jackets and scarves.

We eventually emerged from the souks to cross the main square Djemma el Fna, the heart of traditional Marrakech and teeming with people and traders' stalls, and arrived back at the hotel for a lunch of vegetable soup, lamb tajine (stew cooked in the oven in a circular earthenware dish with a conical cover) and melon.

As we were finishing lunch we were greeted by Hassan, the only trader allowed inside the hotel. His engaging smile and friendly sales patter were greatly entertaining as he went about selling his scarves, blankets and trinkets.

We also met Id Balaid Lahcen, the chief Berber from Imlil who oversees all the support services (mules, accommodation etc.) for treks in the Toubkal area. So important a person is he that he has business cards, wears a pin-striped jacket and owns a battered old car he keeps in Imlil. However he is also a very warm and friendly person who will happily give you a spontaneous hug, and while we were in Aroumd nothing was too much trouble for him in making us welcome.



Lunch at the hotel

After lunch the three minibuses arrived and we managed to squeeze not only our luggage but also a huge amount of fresh food (and a considerable number of cans of beer) into and onto them before setting off for Aroumd. On the arid plain south of Marrakech the road to Asni is straight and well surfaced, but not quite wide enough for two vehicles to pass. The technique for passing approaching vehicles was to drive at high speed on a collision course until the last few seconds, each vehicle then veering off so that its nearside wheels were on the stony verge so they could pass. It was an alarming experience until you realised that all drivers have the manoeuvre timed to perfection.



On a clear day the Atlas mountains can be seen from Marrakech, but in summer the heat haze obscures them until you approach Asni in the foothills. At this small town a single track metalled road leaves the main highway to wind its way up the Mizane valley giving glimpses of rural village life, with mules the main mode of transport and villagers working in the terraced fields. The road deteriorates into a bumpy track for the last few miles to the roadhead at Imlil, set in a surprisingly green and wooded valley beneath the barren mountains towering above.

Here was the end of our 2000-mile journey and the beginning of the walking.

Though the track continues the extra mile up to Around it is too rough for a minibus, so we waited on the terrace of the Café Soleil next to a tumbling waterfall while our luggage and supplies were off-loaded onto the back of a battered old pick-up truck for the final leg.

Unloading the minibuses outside the Café Soleil



Being at the roadhead, Imlil is the gateway for virtually all treks in the Toubkal area and as such is geared up to tempt passing tourists to spend their Dirhams. For such a small place there is a large range of shops selling everything from food, refreshments, postcards and maps to locally made blankets, pottery and leather sandals. We didn't spend long looking round but set off following Mike up through woods and terraced fields towards Around. It was an easy half-hour walk and our first opportunity for a close look at the Berber lifestyle that we were to find so fascinating over the next eleven days.

Around is a bleak looking village of grey stone buildings with flat earth-covered roofs packed together and stepped into the steep, stony hillside above the green irrigated fields in the valley below. As we entered the village the local children, used to seeing tourists pass, rushed out to meet and follow us with the greeting "Dirham Monsieur? ... stylo? .....bonbon?" We were told it was best to simply ignore them, so we continued through the narrow twisting alleys between the buildings to enter the courtyard of the house that Exodus use as a base for their expeditions.

The house is on several levels, the lowest being an open courtyard entered through a door in the wall from the alley. Off this yard are two showers (cold water only) and two toilets (French style and flushing, provided you fill the tin from the tap and flush it yourself). Open stairs then lead up past a washing trough with three taps to two roof-patio areas. Behind these are several rooms including an Exodus store room, a small kitchen with gaz stoves, and a long dormitory with rugs and foam mattresses on the floor and one small, unglazed window in the end wall.

Open stairs lead from the lower patios to another at a higher level backed by an open verandah and a long room furnished with soft chairs and cushions and used for dining in inclement weather. Compared with other houses in the village it is furnished and finished in grander style and represents five star accommodation. The patios face south with a splendid view over the roofs of other houses and the terraced fields into the Mizane valley with Toubkal on the skyline.

View south from the roof terrace





By the kitchen entrance is the 'fridge' consisting of a waist high earthenware pot full of water which uses the time-honoured method of keeping the water (and the coke, beer and bottled mineral water immersed in it) cool by allowing evaporation through its unglazed surface. Nearby was posted a list of names to tick for drinks taken, an arrangement which was to be employed at camps as well, and the lads made good use of these credit facilities.

The pick-up truck couldn't be driven up to the house, so had to be unloaded on a flat area in the valley bottom and baggage loaded onto mules to be brought up to the house. As the mules arrived we helped unload them and carry the luggage upstairs. We then began to sort out our own kit and pack walking gear into a rucksack to be carried and camping gear into a kitbag for loading on the mules, while Mike sorted out and checked the food supplies. Provisions for the first week were to be taken with us, and when we got to the Toubkal hut the remaining supplies would be brought up directly from Aroumd.



Village houses in Aroumd

There was time before dinner for a stroll round the village, which by early evening was quiet and virtually deserted. Darkness falls early and suddenly at this latitude; at 8 o'clock it was beginning to get dark and by 8.30 it was pitch black.

Dinner by lantern light on the patio consisted of lashings of vegetable soup, a spicy vegetable tagine and melon for dessert. Having had little sleep the previous night we turned in early at 10.00, and most people took advantage of the mild night to bring the foam mattresses out onto the patio and sleep under the stars.



Mike checks the stores



Dinner by lantern light



'The staff also drank some of these beers!'





<b>Saturday 4th July</b>	<b>Trek via Excursion</b>	<b>Ouaneskra Tizi n'Tamatert Tanamrout (E)</b>	<b>2175 2279 2630</b>
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We awoke early, rolled up our sleeping bags and did the final packing, and left our kit bags to be loaded with the tents and food supplies onto the mules.

During breakfast our guide Mohammed arrived, and at 9.00 he led us off while the muleteers did the final loading.



Rise and shine!



The terraced fields of Aroumd and Toubkal from the patio



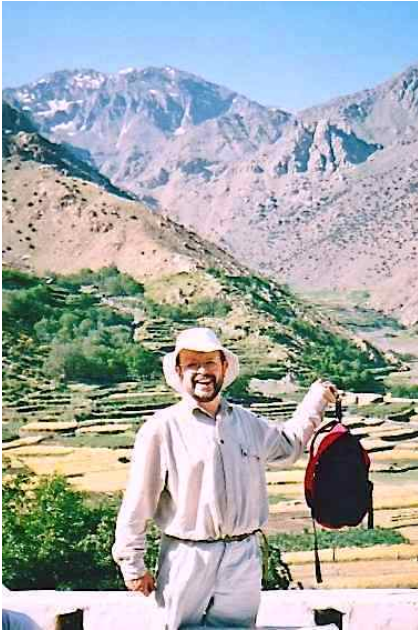
Roof repairs on the neighbouring house as we pack



The mules ready for loading

We set off back down the track towards Imlil before turning off to follow an irrigation channel for some distance round the mountain towards the village of Tamatert. Walking on the level and under the shade of walnut trees, with the aroma from wild mint that had been crushed beneath our boots, it was a pleasant and easy start to the Trek. Again our approach to the village had been noticed by the children who greeted us with requests for money, sweets and presents. There was then a steep climb through the village to join the main track up to the col of Tizi n'Tamatert.





'Will I be able to manage this huge rucksack?'



Leaving Aroumd

It was a beautiful day, and hot work walking up to the col, but with a cooling breeze it wasn't as hot as I thought it would be. We found some shade for our first leg stop and in a further 20 minutes had reached the col. We didn't seem to have climbed very much but there was a fine view back over Imlil to the peak of Adrar el Hajj and the col of Tizi Mzik that we would cross on our return to Aroumd in ten days time.



View ahead to the main peak of Tanamrout, with the east peak just visible along the ridge



View back over Imlil to Adrar el Hajj and Tizi Mzik

Ahead was the deep Imenane valley with the huge masses of Angour and Jbel Oukaimeden on the skyline and the following day's route up to Tizi n'Addi rising between them.

The first day was planned to be an easy walk to arrive at Ouaneskra for lunch, but as it was still only 11.00 when we arrived at the col there was plenty of time for an excursion up Tanamrout. Eight lads opted for the excursion while most of the rest stayed on the col with the rucksacks and a few followed the mules when they crossed the col to go down to the campsite.

The ascent wasn't difficult, but it was steep and in some places loose, and without a path it was hard work. It took longer than expected to reach the forepeak at the eastern end of the long ridge leading on to the main summit. Given the time it would have taken to reach the main summit and descend again we decided to make this peak our objective. The effort was worth it for the fine southern panorama over the Mizane and Imenane valleys with the big peaks including Toubkal and Ouanoukrim on the skyline. We were back at the col by 1.00 to collect rucksacks for the final leg gently down the easy track to camp.





Jbel Oukaïmeden (L) and Angor (R) with the ridge route to Jbel Oukaïmeden along the skyline from Tizin'Addi

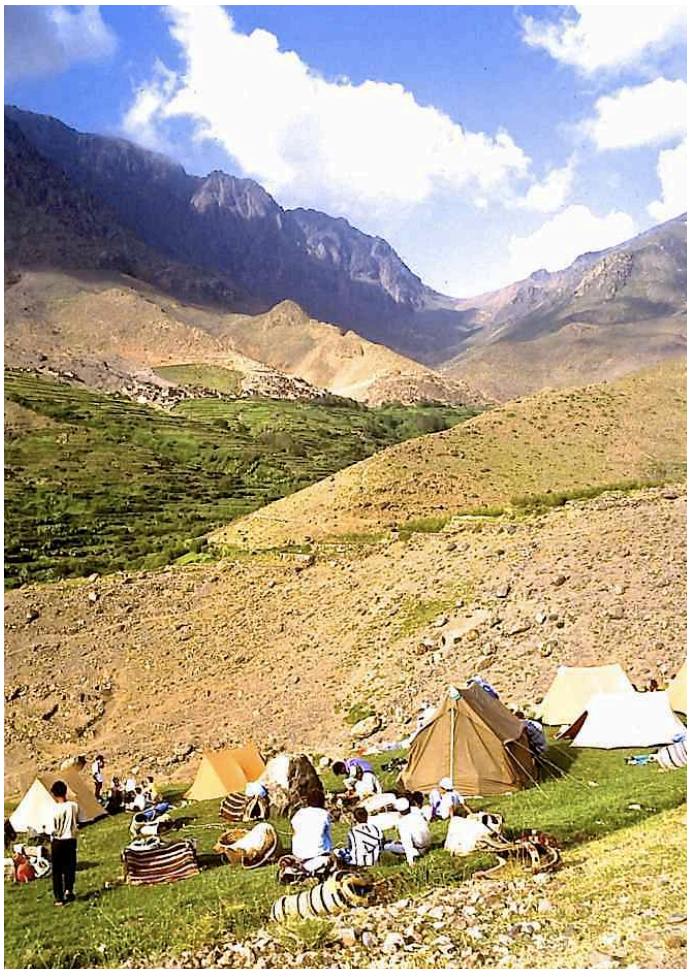


The summit party on Tanamrout (E), with Toubkal and Ouanoukrim on the skyline

We arrived to find that our campsite was ideal: two fairly level grassy terraces beside the track high above the village of Ouaneskra, with a fast-flowing irrigation channel as a convenient water supply running along one side. The cook tent (a large brown ridge tent) had already been erected and the mules unloaded before we arrived and our head cook Brahim had prepared us a superb spread for lunch.

It consisted of a selection of ham, corned beef, fish and cheese accompanied by a huge mixed salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, red onions, beans and chick-peas, with flat cakes of Berber bread, and melon to follow. We were to discover to our delight that this style of lunch was to be our normal fare whenever we met the mules at lunchtime.

During the afternoon some cloud developed over Angour and we had a few spots of rain, sufficient to persuade those who hadn't yet put up their tents to do so quickly. But it came to nothing, and we spent a lazy afternoon sunbathing, reading and washing in the stream. Several children came up from the village, but these did not pester for presents, and were content to just sit and watch what we were up to. We also had a visit from the man whose fields we were camping on, and he went away satisfied with his fee; just over £1, not per head but for all of us!



View over Tacheddirt to the cliffs of Angour



The gannets swoop on lunch



Free cold showers!



With lunch over and the washing up done some of the muleteers set about making bread. The dough was mixed and kneaded in a large polythene bowl then formed into circular slabs about 20 cm in diameter and 1 cm thick which were covered and left while a fire was built. Our main meals were cooked on two stoves fitted to the tops of large camping gaz cylinders, but these couldn't be used to make bread.

The muleteers had collected any wood they came across during the day and it was used to build a fire between two low rocks backing on to a large boulder. Each loaf was heated gently on a flat tray placed across the rocks, turning it many times until it had risen, and then finished off by placing it vertically alongside the flames.

It's a primitive method, but it produced acceptably tasty bread and the method was used at most of our camps until we got to the Toubkal hut, when fresh bread baked in Aroumd was brought up with the rest of the supplies.



When the sun had gone behind the ridge there was little twilight, and as darkness fell the pattern of evening meals emerged. Normally this would be ready at about dusk and it consisted of a generous 3-course dinner with vegetable soup for starter, a main course of some sort of stew with fresh vegetables and either whirl or fresh fruit to follow. It was a mild evening for standing around the Gaz lantern chatting, but before long we had our nightcaps of coffee or drinking chocolate and turned in.



Brahim serves dinner by lantern light

<b>Times:</b>			
Tizi n'Tamatert	1-40	1-40	
Tanamrout (E)	40	2-20	
Tizi n'Tamatert	30	2-50	
Ouaneskra	1-00	3-50	(5-30)
<b>Distance:</b>	11 km		
<b>Ascent:</b>	770 m		
<b>Descent:</b>	550 m		





Jbel Oukaïmeden from camp above Ouaneskra

We got up at 7.00 as the rays of the sun struck the tents and had a buffet breakfast of Alpen and bread and jam, washed down with tea or coffee. We took down tents, packed kitbags and set off with day-sacks at 8.30, leaving the muleteers to load up and follow on. This was to be the normal morning routine except when we needed to make a specially early start.

The direct path leading up from Ouaneskra to Tizi n'Addi is very steep, rising 1000 m in 3 km, so after descending to cross the river in the valley bottom at Ouaneskra we took a longer route and followed an easy path up the valley towards Tacheddirt. This village has some splendid examples of the irrigation and cultivation methods used by the Berbers in all the villages we passed through.



Approaching Tacheddirt through terraced wheat fields

The houses in the villages are clustered together on the steep mountain sides, leaving the valley floor for growing crops. Originally there would have been little level ground in the valleys for cultivation, but over many years the lower slopes have been formed into terraces, some fairly large where the terrain allows, but some as small as a tennis court. Irrigation water is diverted from the river well upstream of the terraces by a partial dam which directs water into the main irrigation channel which flows very gradually round the mountain-side. This main channel is well-made, usually from earth or rocks but sometimes with sections of concrete in the more affluent villages, and where it passes over each terrace there is a temporary 'stopper' of earth which can be removed to allow water to flow onto the terrace.

Below the upper terraces are further channels which collect the water again and distribute it to successively lower terraces. Often where the ground is too steep for terracing, water is allowed to trickle down the slopes to provide lush grass for hay. This system seems very well organised and we frequently saw irrigation to one terrace being closed off and that to another being opened.

As we walked up through the terraces towards Tacheddirt it was amazing to see what a range of crops could be harvested from such an inherently hostile environment: maize, wheat, barley, potatoes and other root crops; even orchards of apples in places, and dotted about amongst everything were walnut trees. The contrast between the vibrant green crops of the irrigated terraces and the bare, arid mountain slopes above is one of the most lasting impressions of the Atlas.

We arrived at Tacheddirt at 9.15 and filled our water bottles at a water pipe which seemed to be the main water supply for the whole village and which Mohammed informed us was the last water we would see until we reached camp at Oukaïmeden. Most of the paths we walked during the trek were clear mule trails and easy to follow but negotiating the maze of alleys between the village houses in Tacheddirt, and most of the other villages we passed through, would have been very difficult without a guide with local knowledge; the maps are no use at all.





Water stop just below the village



View back across the Imenane valley to Tizi n'Tamatert and Tanamrout

We emerged from Tacheddirt having turned through almost 180° and headed steeply uphill towards Tizi n'Addi. The remaining 700 m of climbing was on a good mule path and Mohammed called leg stops twice on the way up so we reached the col without too much strain at 11.15.

As the mules gained on us during the climb the wailing songs of the muleteers rang round the mountains and announced their approach, and while we rested at the col they caught us up.

The mules arrive at Tizi n'Addi



There were three possibilities from the col. The easiest was to take the mule track directly down to camp at Oukaïmeden, and the other two were to go over the summits of Jbel Oukaïmeden or Angour, in opposite directions along the ridge. Angour was by far the longest alternative, with another 600 m of climbing, so we opted for the 300 m ascent to Jbel Oukaïmeden. We collected our lunch supplies which the mules had brought up and set off along the ridge, all but Rob Hempstock who wasn't feeling very well (probably from too much sun the previous day), and he walked down with the mules.

The ridge is quite a steep and exposed arête in places and involved some tricky scrambling, including an awkward descent down a rock step at one point, after which it was dubbed 'death ridge'. Partly because of the tricky ground and also the fact that we had climbed 1300 m before lunch the ridge took a total of two hours including stops, and some lads were very tired when we reached the summit at 1.40.

We had lunch by the top pylon of the chair lift which rises from Oukaïmeden, with a fine view back over the ridge to the huge mass of Angour, but the higher peaks to the south were now wreathed with cloud.

The contrast between the primitive life of the Berbers in the Imenane valley we had just left behind and modern skiing facilities on the mountain above seemed most incongruous.

Angour from the summit of Jbel Oukaïmeden





From the summit we could see right down to the village of Oukaimeden and we could also spot where the muleteers had set up camp, on the grassy banks of a small reservoir (not shown on either map) just east of the village. The grazing of animals around Oukaimeden and on the slopes above is prohibited until mid-August, when the grass and flowers will have seeded for the following year, and consequently the mountain-sides were much greener than in any of the other valleys we passed through.



Heading off down the north ridge, with the reservoir where camp was set up on the far right

After tea (mint or traditional) and biscuits we put up tents and washed in the stream. Then the main event of the afternoon was watching the muleteers shoeing a mule. The old shoe was clearly giving the mule some pain and it took a team of them to hold the mule steady while a rope was tied to its foot and each end of the rope pulled taut so that the offending shoe could be removed and a new one fitted.







Fitting the new shoe (Photo Stuart Kistruck)

Before dinner there was plenty of time for the short walk into the village, which is principally a ski resort, with a large and incongruous apartment block in the middle. It was virtually deserted, but there was a shop open and we were made very welcome at the French Alpine Club hut which served refreshments including beer.

We had anticipated having to camp on very rough ground at some places and had brought large sheets of heavy duty builders' polythene to put under the groundsheet of each tent to protect it. So far we hadn't needed to use it, but the muleteers had spotted it and asked if they could use it to keep the dew off them as they bivouacked. So for each night until we got to the Toubkal hut they built their usual shelter of walls made from the padded saddles from the mules, but now with a waterproof roof.



An idyllic camping spot with Jbel Oukaimeden beyond

The afternoon cloud had dispersed, and it was a clear evening, and noticeably colder at this higher altitude. We had dinner by the light of the moon (and Gaz lamps), accompanied by the loud croaking of hundreds of frogs round the edge of the lake.

<b>Times:</b>	Tacheddirt	40	40	<b>Distance:</b> 12 km	<b>Ascent:</b> 1330 m <b>Descent:</b> 930 m
	Tizi n'Addi	1-30	2-10		
	Jbel Oukaimeden	1-20	3-30		
	Oukaimeden	45	4-15		
			(6-50)		



<b>Monday 6th July</b>	<b>Trek via Excursion</b>	<b>Tiourdiou Tizi n'Attar Jbel Attar</b>	<b>1800 3100 3267</b>
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It was a beautiful, clear morning again with a pleasantly cool breeze. It was also Carl Mitchell's 16th birthday and so after breakfast we sang a round of 'Happy Birthday', presented him with a card signed by us all, and gave him his birthday present - the chance to ride on a donkey which had been grazing near camp since we arrived. The donkey was rather frisky and didn't care for the idea, but Mohammed held its head steady while Carl made several hesitant attempts to get on. Encouraged by the enthusiastic crowd he eventually succeeded and the donkey trotted off towards the lake before coming to a sudden halt and tipping Carl onto the grass.

At 8.40 we headed off through the lush pastures towards Tizi n'Attar clearly visible on the skyline; easy walking for the first leg then more steeply up to the col. The mules were following on and gradually gaining on us, and as the muleteers approached, the wailing songs that they often sang to one another when on the march drifted up on the breeze.



Tizi n'Attar with Jbel Attar to its left

We arrived at the col at 10.20 to find a dramatic view over the other side. The col drops away in the centre of an arc of broken cliffs leading down to the depths of the Ourika valley with the village of Agounss just visible 700 m below. Beyond the valley arid brown ridges lead off many miles to the eastern horizon. The mules arrived shortly after we did and once their loads had been checked and tightened they set off on what seemed like a suicide route down the cliffs.



Checking the loads before descending, with Jbel Oukaïmeden beyond



The mules set off down the zig-zags



View down into the Ourika valley and distant Agounss



All but two of the group made the easy ascent to Jbel Attar, from where we had the best panorama yet, with all the big peaks of the Toubkal massif along the southern horizon, though the northern plain was just a sea of heat haze. We weren't the first to arrive at the summit that morning, for we met a Berber herdsman in traditional coarse, brown jellaba watching over his herd of goats as they tried to nibble some sustenance from the stony ground.



On Jbel Attar with Toubkal and Ouanoukrim on the left skyline.

We returned to the col to collect packs and follow the mules. Both from the top looking down, and from the bottom looking back up it seemed impossible that a mule track could cross the steep shattered rock face, but a path there was and well-built too, coming down in what must have been over a hundred tight hairpins.

The gradient eases over scree and boulders as the path leads down to Agounss, the highest village in the Ourika valley.



Leg stop approaching Agounss

We arrived at the outskirts of the village to be greeted as usual by a group of children, this time simply inquisitive and less demanding, then we diverted into a side valley where we found that the muleteers had our usual spread laid out for lunch beneath shady walnut trees. It was much hotter down in the valley and we were grateful for the shade and the cool water from the stream.

The muleteers were always in good humour, often singing their strange wailing songs as they drove the mules along, and on this occasion some of them began singing after lunch. Before long they all joined in and we had a complete chorus, singing, dancing, clapping hands and beating out a rhythm on plastic washing-up bowls! The temptation was too much for Adrian and he just had to get up and join them.





Inquisitive local children



Lunchtime musical entertainment

We then walked down the delightful upper Ourika valley, through terraced fields and a succession of fascinating villages clinging to the sides of the valley. We too were the subject of great interest; our passing brought youngsters scrambling down to the side of the path to follow us, and interested faces appeared at the unglazed windows of the houses.

We were now in an area not often visited by expeditions, and the children hadn't grown used to viewing tourists as potential sources of income. They were just fascinated to watch this strangely clad group pass through their village.

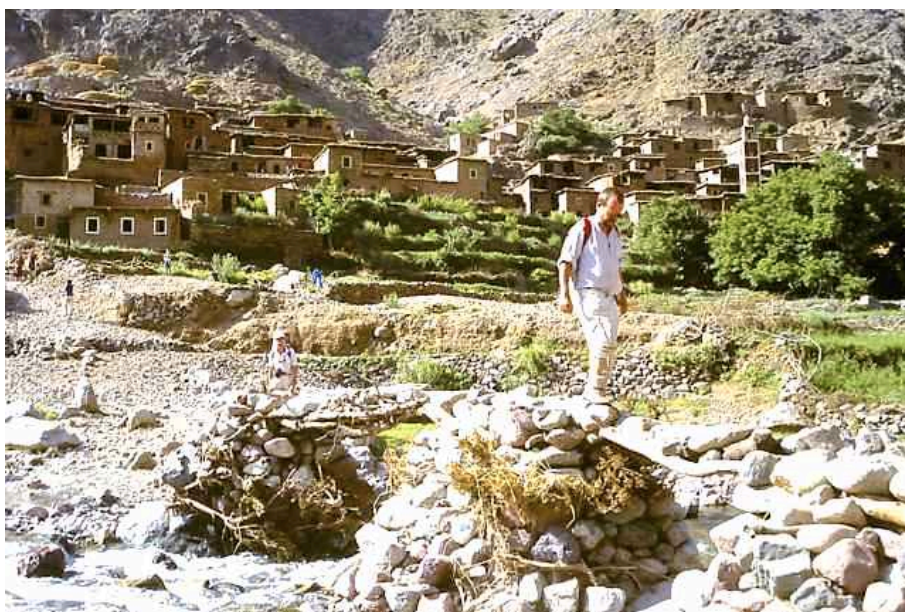


Approaching the village of Timichchi

The mules overtook us again before we reached Tiourdiou and after we passed through the village we went down to cross the river by means of a footbridge of interesting construction. It consisted of three piles of stones, one on each bank and one in the centre of the river, with each gap spanned by a pair of tree trunks supporting a row of large, flat stone slabs. The whole was free standing and I suspect would need rebuilding after the spring thaw. A stony path then led us into the narrow side-valley from which the Tinzer river flows into the main Ourika valley.



The Tinzer river enters the main Ourika valley



Crossing the river below Tiourdiou



Mike hadn't camped at Tiourdiou before and wasn't sure where might be suitable, but the place we found was ideal for the night's bivouac. We followed the main path into the Tinzer valley and crossed the river to find a level though rather lumpy area shaded by trees between the river and some crags.

It was an idyllic spot to end such an excellent day's trekking. The river was cold, but not too cold for total immersion, and after the very hot and dusty walk down the valley almost everyone had a thorough wash of body and clothes and then took advantage of the warm late afternoon sunshine to dry off. There was also a gentle breeze which enabled washing to be readily dried over lines strung between the trees. Our splashing about in the river caused great amusement amongst the village children who had gathered on the far bank to watch this unusual spectacle in fits of giggles.



It was clearly the time of year for hay-making. We had previously seen lots of people near Aroumd and Tacheddirt carrying their bundles of cut hay, and here the season was in full swing. During the afternoon and evening dozens of people (almost entirely women) came down the path on the other side of the river with their huge roped bundles of hay on their backs. For the younger girls (about seven years old) the bundles seemed to be much more than their bodyweight, and with the loose hay hiding all their bodies but for protruding legs from the knee down, they made a most amusing sight, resembling a walking haystack.

Convenient for washing though it was, the site was rather stony and criss-crossed with tree roots which would have made pitching tents troublesome. However, this didn't matter because we were going to have a compulsory bivouac. The following day's route up the Tinzer valley was too narrow in places for heavily-laden pack mules to pass, so they would have to take a much longer route and would therefore need a very early start, which would be easier without having to take down and pack tents.

At this lower altitude it was a milder night, but being under trees in a steep-sided valley it soon got dark so we turned in early in preparation for a dawn start.

The mules were often allowed to graze freely around camp, but on this occasion, when they were sharing the same small area as us, they were hobbled to prevent them walking on sleeping bodies during the night.



<b>Times:</b>	Tizi n'Attar	1-30	1-30	<b>Distance:</b>	16 km	<b>Ascent:</b>	760 m
	Excursion Jbel Attar	25	1-55			<b>Descent:</b>	1540 m
	Agounss	1-05	3-00				
	Tiourdiou	1-50	4-50				
			(7-45)				

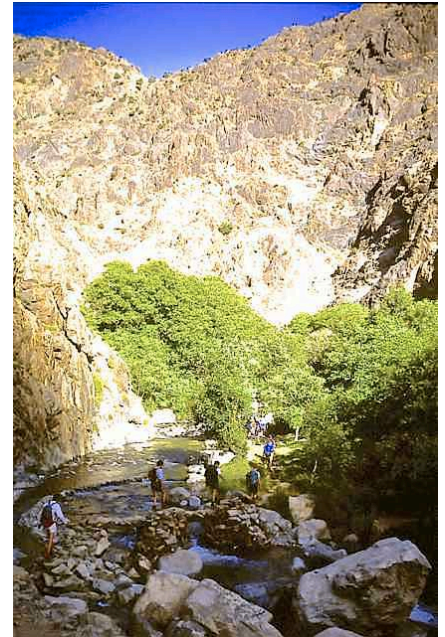


First light was at 5.00. By 6.00 we were all up and dressed and having breakfast, and by 7.15 we had packed, the mules were loaded and we set off. The mules waded the river and went back out into the Ourika valley, while we headed upstream to follow the Tinzer river. (The 1:100,000 map refers to the Tinzart river in its higher reaches and the Tifni lower down. The 1:50,000 map calls it the Tinzer river for its whole length.)

It was another glorious day, but as we had set off so early the sun didn't reach into the depths of the valley for some hours and it was a cool start to the morning's walk. Although it was uphill all day it hardly seemed like it as the interesting path followed the river, switching frequently from one bank to the other and going over rocky outcrops and through irrigated hay-fields. There were some small bridges, but most of the river crossings involved more or less successful boulder-hopping, or for the less confident, simple wading. Mohammed was obviously enjoying the walk too; he burst into song on several occasions and his songs echoed off the walls of the valley.



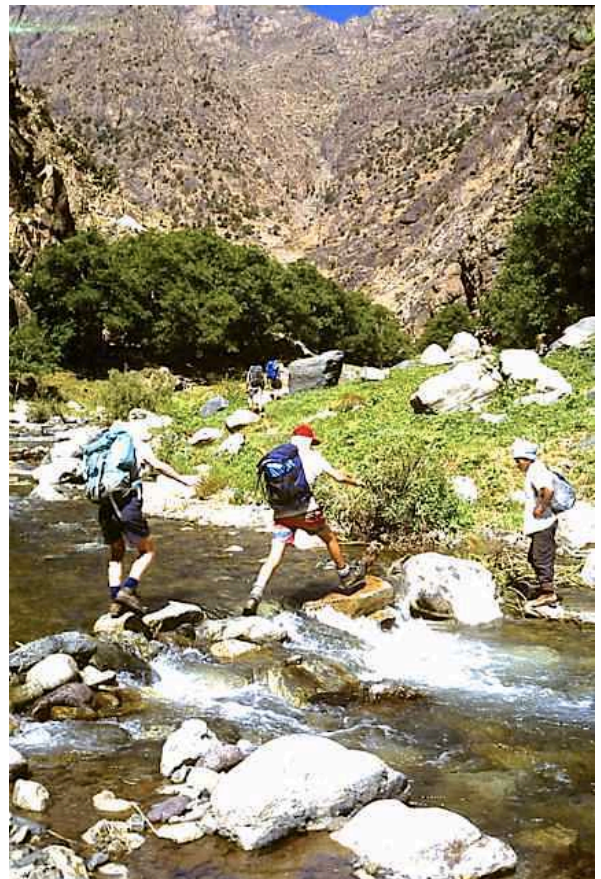
Leaving camp for the first of many river crossings



This crossing is by a small stone bridge



Crossing a rocky bluff high above the river





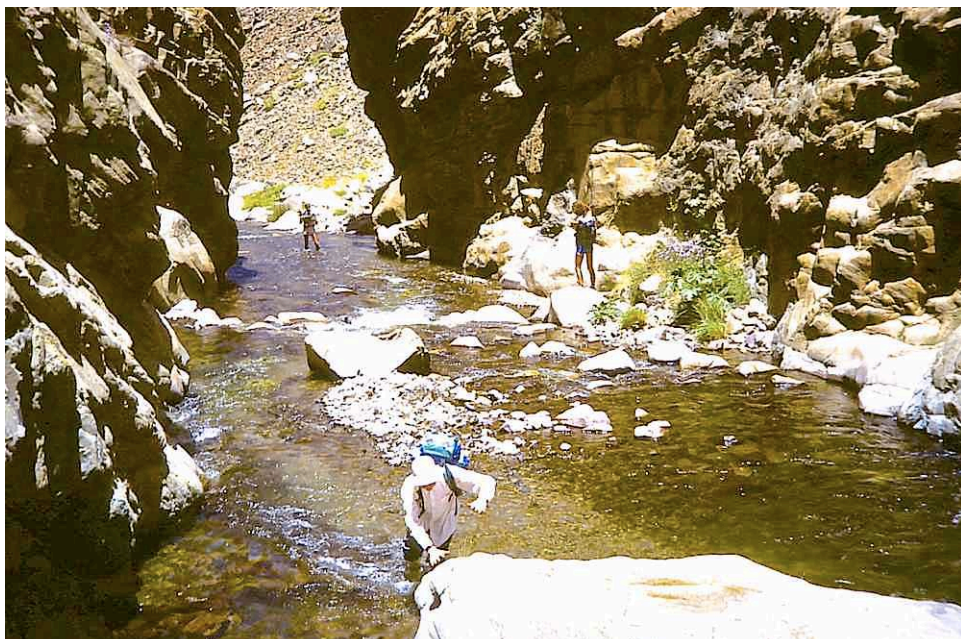
This lower part of the Tinzer valley is too narrow and steep sided for a village or terraced fields, there are just small irrigated areas producing hay, and we again met dozens of hay carriers heading down towards Tiourdiou under their huge loads. One or two were men but the majority were women of all ages who scurried effortlessly in their plastic shoes even down the steep, rocky slopes.

For the final few hundred metres before the valley opens out into the high Tinzer basin the river passes through the Kassaria gorge, and with vertical rock walls on both sides there is no alternative but to wade. By keeping to underwater gravel banks we were able to avoid the deep pools, so the water was seldom more than knee deep and walking against the fairly strong current wasn't too difficult.

Hay carrier skipping down a steep, rocky path



Heading for the jaws of the Kassaria gorge



Just after entering the gorge





The most dramatic section of the gorge

At 1.30 we emerged from the gorge onto the grassy pastures above and changed or emptied our footwear, keenly looking forward to lunch. A further ten minutes walking brought us to our lunch spot (which was also to be our campsite for the night) in the valley just south-west of point 2417 on the 1:50,000 map. The valley bottom there is flat and marshy, but there was just sufficient firm, level grass at the southern side to pitch all the tents.



We were just below the summer village named Azib Tifnoute on the 1:50,000 map (but apparently called Taloutoult by the villagers), and as we had lunch children came down from the village and sat on rocks nearby to watch us, and they remained there all afternoon. Few expeditions pass this way and we must have looked as strange and unusual a sight to them as they were to us.



They didn't look on us as a potential source of money and sweets (though there were a few tentative requests), but they were content to just sit there cautiously observing us. As they became accustomed to our presence they became less fearful and reticent, and it was possible to engage them in sign language and take photographs without them turning their backs and running off.

Apart from sunbathing and boot drying not a lot happened during the afternoon. Graham and Adrian took a walk up to the village and returned fairly soon with stories of being chased off by vicious 'Marocweilers'.



Frisbee-throwing with the locals

The village is used only in the summer months when the villagers bring up their sheep, goats and cows to graze. At one stage the cows made an attempt to reclaim the grass that we were sitting on but eventually gave up and moved off.

In all the villages we passed through it was surprising that we never saw children playing games of any sort. When we started throwing a frisbee about they were intrigued and when invited to join in they were initially very tentative, especially the girls. However, some of them quickly got the hang of it and one little mite was soon returning it with speed and accuracy.

As the sun dropped behind the ridge shortly after 5.00 the temperature fell rapidly, and we speculated on the mules not finding us before dark and the possibility of a compulsory bivouac without tents or sleeping bags. However, the mules were sighted coming over Tizi n'Imchichki at 6.30 and within 15 minutes they trotted down into camp with the muleteers behind singing and whooping in delight at having finally got there after a 12-hour day.

With regard to the camping arrangements, the original plan had been for us to help with the chores around camp by pitching, taking down and packing the tents, helping to prepare and cook the food and doing the washing up.

But apparently it was Exodus policy to try to encourage muleteers to help around camp, and so far, apart from pitching tents and washing up personal utensils, they had done all the chores, effectively and with good humour. However, as they had had such a long day we set about peeling the vegetables while they put up the cook tent and got the stoves ready.



It is amazing that some lads couldn't perform the simple task of peeling a potato without removing more skin than potato they left behind, indeed, some of them admitted to having never peeled one before!

While dinner was cooking a local woman began screaming and gesticulating at the muleteers from up the hillside. Apparently the problem was that the mules had been allowed to wander and were grazing on grass meant for her cows. After about fifteen minutes of abuse she returned to the village and shortly afterwards an old man in traditional garments (presumably a village elder) came down and there followed some heated discussions. I don't know if any money changed hands, but after a while he calmed down and then took mint tea with the muleteers, so all was resolved.

<b>Times:</b>	Taloutoult	4-20 (6-10)	<b>Distance:</b> 11 km	<b>Ascent:</b> 800 m	<b>Descent:</b> 150 m
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Sunrise at Taloutoult

It was a day of three routes: the peak-baggers went via the long ridge to Iferouane to bag Trek's first ever 4000 m peak; the Valley Activities Club followed the Tinzer river; and the mules went the most direct route over Tizi Tougroudadene. And we all met up at Trek's highest ever campsite at 3000 m, just below Tizi n'Ouraine.

By 9 o'clock everyone had made their choice of route and the two walking parties set off in opposite directions, leaving the mules to be loaded and follow on as usual. Mohammed led the Ridge Club of Mike, Robin, Simon, Graham, eleven lads and myself, and Brahim 'led' the Valley Activities Club of Adrian and the other nine lads.

The Ridge Club set off uphill through the village of Taloutoult, waded through flocks of sheep and ran the gauntlet of barking 'Marocweilers' to head up towards Tizi n'Imchichki which the mules had crossed the previous evening. After a short leg we reached a subsidiary ridge leading just south of east up to Adrar n'Tarourht, the long north ridge of Iferouane.

We left the mule track and followed this ridge, without a path and steep in places but with no difficulties, to arrive at the main ridge at about 3500 m at 11.30, after two more short legs. It was another brilliantly clear day with a cool, gentle breeze, and as we gained height there was an increasingly impressive view back to the big peaks surrounding the upper Tinzer basin.



Leg stop as we reached the main ridge with Toubkal (4167), Tichki (3753) and Aksoual (3842)





View along the main ridge with the summit still a long way off

The remaining 4 km and 500 m of ascent to the summit were quite hard toil for some. This wasn't because of the terrain, which was easy walking on stony/bouldery ground, but we had already climbed 1000 m and there were a number of false summits, beyond which we kept losing some hard gained height, and presumably the thinner air was also having an effect. We didn't quite make the summit for lunch, but stopped at 2.00 for an hour's lunch break on the final subsidiary peak before the main summit. A further 15 minutes then brought us to the top.

The 1:50,000 map gives Ifrouane's height as 4001 m and the 1:100,000 map gives it as 3996 m. In view of the doubts about the fourth figure, and the fairly large discrepancies in the heights of some other summits (Jbel Oukaimeden varies by 11 m and Jbel Attar by 21 m), the sensible *scientific* thing to do is to round the height to 3 significant figures, 4000 m. Whatever its height it was certainly the highest Trek had ever been (the previous record was Kleine Matterhorn, 3883 m, above Zermatt in 1975).



The summit party

Seen from a distance it isn't a very dramatic summit, just the highest point on a long rounded ridge, but the view from the top is wide ranging. Cliffs falling to the north-west held some snow in the gullies, and beyond there was a splendid panorama over the Tinzer basin to the 12,000-foot ridge linking the summits of Toubkal, Aksoual and Bou Iguenouane on the skyline.



To the south and east the view extended across the brown, arid foothills to Jbel Sahro and the Sahara, and we could even see the prominent peak of Jbel Siroua (the plug of an old volcano) some 30 miles away. According to Mike it was very unusual to be as clear as it was and long distance views were normally obscured by heat haze.



Hazy view south from the summit towards the Sahara

The descent was a little more tricky, over more broken ground which was sometimes loose underfoot. We contoured the flanks of the next subsidiary summit and then turned south to the col which links up with the Adrar n'Dern ridge. It is possible to walk over the two summits on Adrar n'Dern and down to Tizi n'Ournine, but by then it was 4.30, so we descended by an easy scree run into the head of the Tinzer valley.



Descent to the head of the Tinzer valley



There, amongst the brown, dusty and barren landscape devoid of all vegetation we found a small, green oasis of soft grassy banks and flowers fed by a clear spring which is the source of the Tinzer river. The water was all the more delicious for not having to sterilise it with iodine (the only water on Trek that didn't receive this treatment).



The spring which is the source of the Tinzer river

Our camp was lower down the valley and with the way ahead unmistakable we headed off in small groups to follow the stream for the final long leg, and arrived in camp between 5.50 and 6.15 tired, dusty and hungry to find the tents erected and dinner on the way.



Camp on the bank of the Tinzer river



The muleteers' improvised shelter

The Valley Activities Club had enjoyed a more leisurely day. They had followed the river through the summer villages of Likempt and Tamenzift. Brahim's navigating had been a bit suspect (their route had taken them up the sides of the valley and back down again with more climbing than seemed necessary). However, it had been a pleasant and interesting walk, and they arrived at the same time as the muleteers for a Berber lunch followed by an easy afternoon sunbathing, washing, and putting up the tents for the Ridge Club.

Camp was set up by the stream where the Tizi n'Ouraine path reaches the valley floor, and in this fairly steep sided valley the sun had already set by the time the Ridge Club straggled into camp. At this higher altitude the temperature fell even more rapidly than the previous night, so we had just a quick splash with stream water and then put on fibre pile jackets for dinner at 7.45. Soon after 9 o'clock we were tucked up in our warm sleeping bags, while the muleteers huddled together under sheets of Ashton Vernon builders' polythene supported by a semi-circle of large rocks and held in place by mule saddles.

<b>Times:</b>	Iferouane	3-30	3-30		<b>Distance:</b> 17 km	<b>Ascent:</b> 1750 m
	Ouraine	1-45	5-15	(9-00)		<b>Descent:</b> 1200 m



**Thursday 9th July**

**Trek  
via**

**Lac d'Ifni  
Tizi n'Ouraine**

**2312  
3120**

The day's first objective, Tizi n'Ouraine, was just a short walk above the campsite, so as people finished packing their kit-bags for the mules they set off individually between 8.15 and 8.30 to meet up on the col.

It was another glorious day with clear visibility again and there were more superb views of the high peaks and down to the Sahara.

Crisp, clear morning air as usual  
when the sun struck camp



The twin peaks of Ouanoukrim and Toubkal from Tizi n'Ouraine

We left the col at 9.00 for the long 1400 m descent to Amsouart. It was easy going down the mule track which follows the crest of the broad ridge before some tight zig-zags lead down into the village of Tagounite. At an altitude below 2000 m the Tizgui valley is low enough to support permanent Berber villages, and the green swathe of their terraced fields lines the valley floor, the first cultivation we had seen in the 20 miles since we left Tiourdou.



The long descent to Amsouart begins



Timzakine in the Tizgui valley



We entered the main Tisgui valley and arrived at Amsouzart at 11.00. In spite of the fact that the village was the lowest point on our route (1800 m) and was on the Saharan side of the Atlas it wasn't as oppressively hot as we had expected, but we were glad of the shade of trees when we stopped for elevenses.

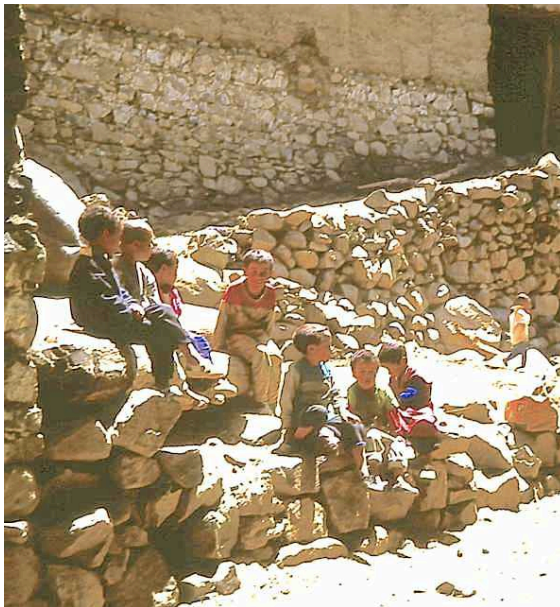
Amsouzart seems quite an important and relatively prosperous village, with overhead power cables leading to some of the houses, and boasting some shops and the Ifni Café, which served soft drinks and boiled sweets (but to the lads' disappointment no chocolate). The small, dark hardware shop had an intriguing variety of goods ranging from traditional farm implements such as scythes to a small stock of 'western' goods such as Omo washing powder. We spent an hour there while the life in the village went busily by and we were again observed by groups of children who didn't pester us but were grateful to be given sweets by some of the lads.



Amsouzart



Queue at the Ifni Café for soft drinks and sweets



Village children ...



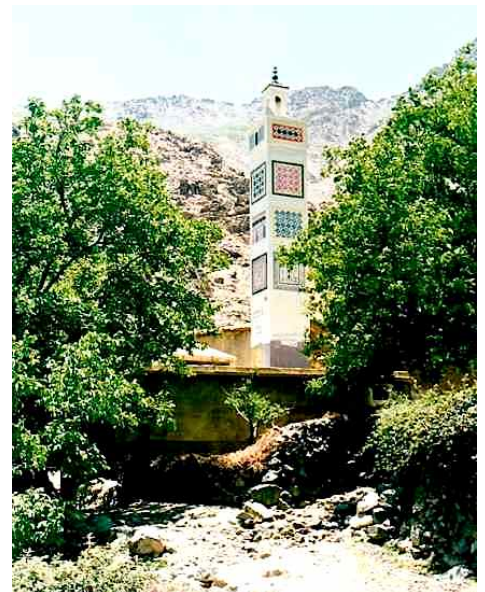
... sharing sweets



We left the village and crossed the river, where the mules were having their rest while the muleteers re-stocked with supplies (including Coke), and followed the track which ascends gradually through the villages of the Islani valley. Again there were signs of greater prosperity: quite a few houses had cement rendering on the outside and some were decorated as well, and Ait Igrane has a beautifully decorated Mosque tower.



In the Islani valley



Minaret at Ait Igrane

In less than an hour we reached Tirhaltine where the muleteers (who had overtaken us on the way up) were preparing lunch under the last shady walnut trees before the track heads up to the open mountains again. Our arrival prompted the proprietor of a café by the side of the track to scurry out with several crates of Coke and place the bottles in a large bath of cold water. He can't often have seen a group the size of ours and the sale of 42 bottles at 5 Dirams (30p) each must have paid his wages for the week. So pleased was he with the custom that staff received free glasses of mint tea.

This brew must also be considered to have medicinal properties, for when one of the mules (very unusually) lay down after it arrived and was clearly unwell, it was brought to its feet, given a drink of mint tea from our tea-pot, and apparently recovered instantly. Nearby there was a good photo-opportunity of a man with two mules walking in a circle in a field treading wheat stalks, but he belligerently demanded 20 Dirhams for the photo so it went untaken.



Lunch under the last shady walnut tree



We left at 2.30 to walk through the village of Imhilene and up the zig-zag path which leads over the high terminal moraine (with several false tops) to Lac d'Ifni. Our first view of the lake was very impressive: huge mountains on either side falling directly to the edge of the azure lake. We went down to the north-east corner of the lake where we found that another group of about a dozen had their tents pitched on the stony beach. We didn't stop, but continued along the path which undulates over rocky outcrops and finally descends to the western shore of the lake where we arrived at 4.00.



Descent to Lac d'Ifni ...



... and our 'campsite' on its rocky shore

At that end of the lake the wide, gently rising valley floor is strewn with large stones and boulders which would make pitching tents difficult, but there were plenty of areas cleared by previous visitors for us to roll out our Karrimats and sleeping bags for the planned bivouac.

The final leg up to the lake had been a hot climb, and most people followed Adrian's lead and took an early dip in the lake.

It was stony underfoot and weedy at the edges but it wasn't too cold and was very invigorating, and the sun was still warm enough for quick drying and sunbathing afterwards.



With no surface stream flowing into or out of it, the lake is the only source of water, so when the mules arrived two good swimmers were sent out into the lake with large gerry-cans to fill them with clearer water undisturbed by the swimmers. The bivvy sites were selected, cleared of small stones and the Karrimats and sleeping bags laid out before dinner at 8.00.

The following day's route over Tizi n'Ouanoums is passable by mules later in the season, but because it ascends a narrow valley hemmed in by high ridges on both sides there were still steep snow-fields across the path at this early stage in the season, which made it impassable for the mules. They would again have to travel a much longer route and return to Aroumd via Tizi n'Tarharate and then ascend the Mizane valley (a route about four times as long as ours). In preparation for the early start we turned in early at 9.30 beneath a canopy of brilliant stars.

<b>Times:</b>	Tizi n'Ouraine	15	15	<b>Distance:</b>	16 km	<b>Ascent:</b>	950 m
	Amsouzart	1-45	2-00			<b>Descent:</b>	1640 m
	Tirhaltaline	50	2-50				
	Lac d'Ifni	1-20	4-10		(7-30)		



Friday 10th July

Trek  
via

Toubkal hut  
Tizi n'Ouanoums

3200  
3664

We awoke at first light at 5.00 and we were all up for a 6 o'clock breakfast. While we ate, the muleteers went off to round up the mules which had abandoned the stony valley floor and gone high up the mountain-side in search of vegetation. Calling, whistling and throwing stones failed to get them to move, so the muleteers had to go up and lead them down. The sun was already hot when we left at 7.15 to cross the almost level boulder field and enter the steep, narrow valley down which the Moursaine stream flows, then to disappear beneath the boulders and feed Lac d'Ifni. To take advantage of the early shade Mohammed kept us going for 1½ hours on the first leg (but for a two-minute water stop), by which time we had climbed about 700 m according to Simon's altimeter.



5 a.m. - rise and shine!



The head of the valley with the start of our ascent in shadow on the right

The relentless climb is on a reasonably good path most of the way, with just a few steep snow patches to cross and the odd bit of easy scrambling, which made it an interesting ascent. When Mike has come this way with other groups the lunch stop has usually been by a waterfall just short of the col, but we were going so well that even with three more generous stops we reached the col by 11.30.



The first leg-stop having climbed 700 m



Arriving at the col with Lac d'Ifni just visible 1350 m below



Looking back there was a fine view down the 1350 m drop to Lac d'Ifni, and ahead was a superb view of the Ouanoukrim chain and the upper Mizane valley.



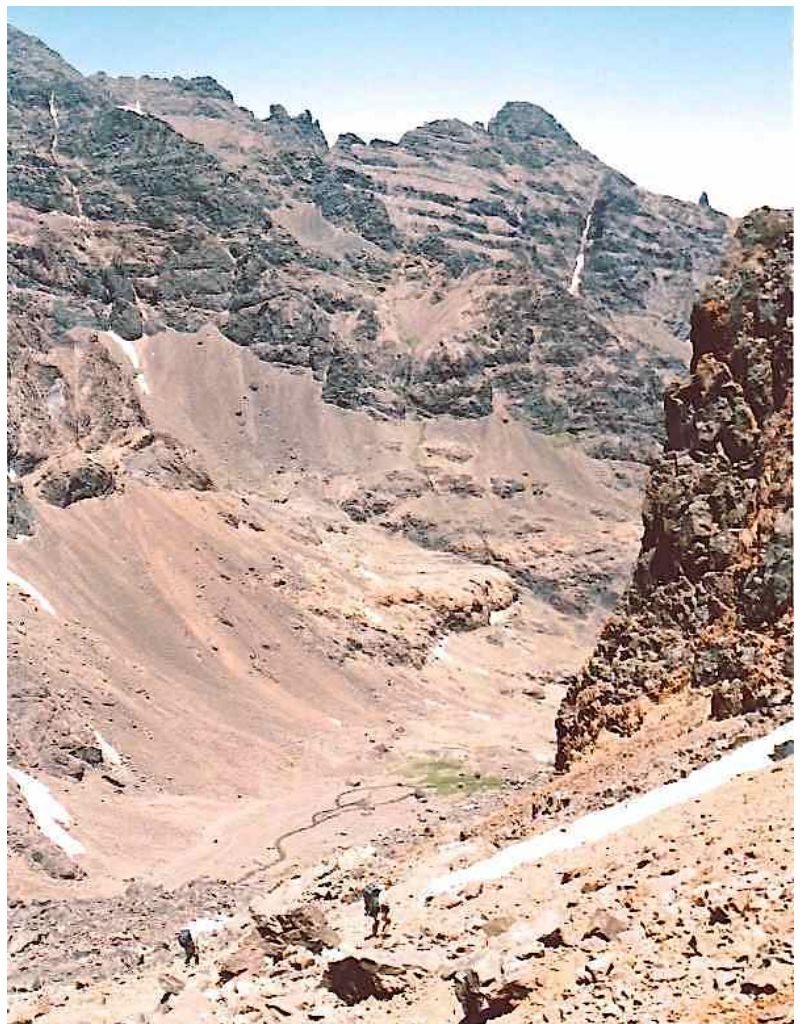
View across the Mizane valley from Tizi n'Ouanoums

We decided to have lunch on the green valley floor and so some lads went straight down the scree runs and arrived there in about ten minutes.

The rest of us stayed a while enjoying the magnificent scenery before following on, and we were all down by 12.15.

We had yet again completed almost the whole day's walk by lunchtime.

The steep descent from Tizi Ouanoums into the Mizane valley with Tadat pinnacle on the right skyline







Ouanoukrim, our peak for two day's time, from just below the col.  
The ascent route is up the left-hand skyline from Tizi n'Ouagane (just out of view)

The place where the Tizi n'Ouanoums path meets the main valley path is a pleasant spot; soft, grassy banks by the clear stream, large boulders to give shelter from the cool breeze blowing up the valley and immense, jagged peaks on both sides. Mike said it was much nicer than the barren surroundings of the hut, so we had a three-hour stop for lunch, sunbathing and a siesta before walking down easily to the hut.



Our record-breaking 3-hour leg-stop





The hut comes into view

The hut is a small but substantially constructed stone building with a corrugated iron roof and has a separate lean-to dormitory. We had a Coke in the main day/dining room which is interesting but rather grubby, and as one would expect, not up to the standards of alpine huts.

The dormitory looked dingy and uninviting too and I was glad we were sleeping in tents. There is just an outside water pipe fed from the stream a little higher up and a single flush-it-yourself French-style toilet.



The Toubkal hut with the entrance to Toubkal's west combe above.

Just below the hut we found over a dozen large, level areas cleared of large stones for pitching tents. When we arrived there were several tents already pitched, but there was still plenty of room for ours. A promising green grassy area on the other side of the path was just below a spring and too boggy for pitching tents.

While we sat around outside the hut waiting for the mules the sun set and it again turned very cold, this time with lots of cloud billowing up from the lower valley. Our new food supplies had been brought up from Aroumd before we arrived, but it wasn't until 8.00 that the mules came up with the camping gear, and it was a bit of a scramble to get the tents pitched properly on the bare, stony ground before it got really dark.

We checked that the sleeping bags of those who wanted to bivouac on Toubkal would be warm enough, and after some swapping of bags most of those who wanted to sleep on the summit were able to do so. We helped to peel the vegetables again, but the meal of soup, pasta with vegetables and cheese sauce wasn't ready until 9.00, soon after which we retired to the warmth of our sleeping bags.

<b>Times:</b>	Tizi n'Ouanoums	2-50	2-50	<b>Distance:</b> 9 km	<b>Ascent:</b> 1370 m
	Toubkal hut	40	3-30 (8-30)		<b>Descent:</b> 480 m



The day offered two different opportunities to climb Toubkal. There was a choice of a morning ascent, returning to camp for lunch, or for those who owned or had borrowed a sufficiently warm sleeping bag, an afternoon ascent, bivouacking overnight on the summit and returning for breakfast the following day. The morning ascent had the advantages of lighter packs, cooler morning air for the walk up, a lazy afternoon sunbathing and a good night's sleep in preparation for climbing Ouanoukrim the following day. Eight lads together with Adrian, Graham, Robin and me took this option, and ten were tempted by the attraction of going with Simon and Mike to sleep on North Africa's highest peak, and two opted for a rest day.

Mohammed led off the morning party at 7.50 to cross the stream just above the hut and begin what according to the guide books is a tedious scree ascent up the west combe. Once over the stream a clear path heads south-east for about 300 m then cuts back north-east, rising diagonally across scree slopes overlooking the hut to some prominent rocks near the lip of the west combe as seen from the hut.

So many people go up the peak and the way is so well trodden that there are numerous tracks over the scree, rocks and snow patches beside the stream which lead up the combe. The view out of the combe is directly across the Mizane valley to Tizi n'Tadat, and the gully we were to ascend to the col looked almost vertical from that angle.

As we approached the great scree bank of the headwall of the combe we turned south-east up an easier gradient to gain the summit ridge at Tizi n'Toubkal, 500 m south-west of the summit. The ridge walk, finally turning east onto the summit plateau, was then on firmer ground.

Leg-stop at the lip of the west combe with the Tadat Pinnacle across the Mizane valley



As we approached the great scree bank of the headwall of the combe we turned south-east up an easier gradient to gain the summit ridge at Tizi n'Toubkal, 500 m south-west of the summit. The ridge walk, finally turning east onto the summit plateau, was then on firmer ground.



We arrived on top at 10.30, two hours and forty minutes after setting off, and in a walking time of just two hours, well within the guide book time of about 3½ to 4 hours.

No doubt our seven-day approach walk had helped our acclimatisation and improved our fitness, but another factor in our quick ascent was Mohammed's choice of route, which had avoided much of the scree and made the climb less laborious.

The morning party on Toubkal



The weather was again crystal clear and the panorama was superb. Even though we were at over 13,000 feet it was neither windy nor cold and so we spent an hour on top in the warm sunshine before heading back.

Though the western flanks are mostly scree, Toubkal is a fine rock peak, and on the eastern side cliffs fall away dramatically into ravines which lead down to the Tizgui valley, beyond which is the Tinzer basin with Iferouane on the skyline.

View east across the Tizgui valley with the Iferouane ridge on the skyline



The rock peaks along the Ouanoukrim ridge were particularly impressive.

The twin peaks of Ouanoukrim, both of which we climbed the following day

From just north of the summit there is also a splendid view directly down to Aroumd, over 7000 feet below.

Aroumd (invisible in this image) is in the valley bottom middle far left, with the Tanamroute ridge above and to the right of it, and Jbel Oukaïmeden above and right of that on the skyline



The Tazaghart Plateau with the Tadat pinnacle on the right



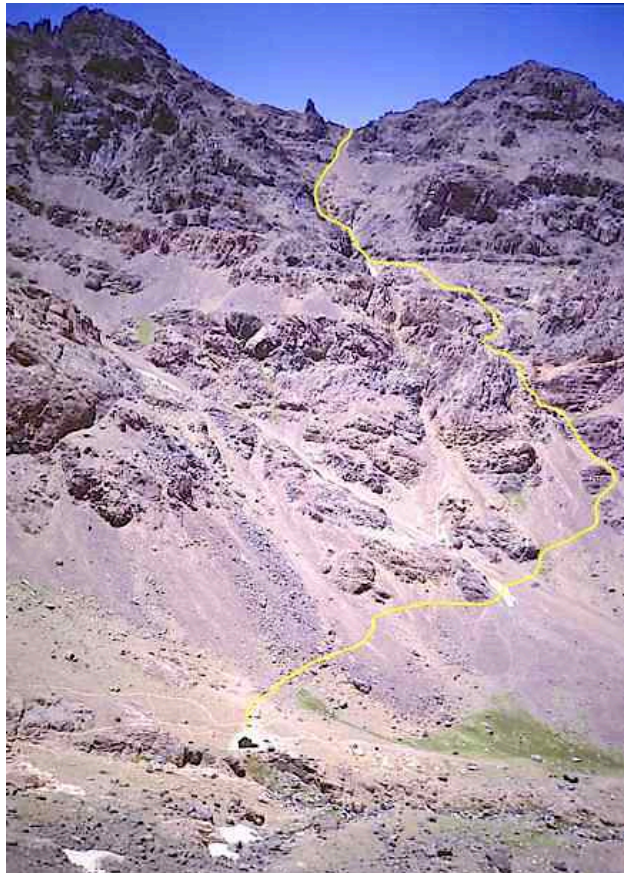
Interesting snow formation near the summit



We returned by the same route, this time picking out all the nice scree runs and were back in an hour and a half, which included three stops to regroup and empty our boots at the bottom of scree runs. On the way down we met a couple of fit-looking young chaps from Birmingham who had come directly from Marrakech without any acclimatisation, and they were finding it much tougher going than we had done.



View down to the hut and our tents ...



... with the route we were to take to Tizi n'Tadat

When we arrived back in camp at 1.00 the afternoon party were tucking into their main meal of couscous, and Brahim then served us another of his delicious salad lunches.



Brahim serves lunch



As the afternoon party, led by Mike and Simon, left at 2.45 there was a lot of cloud billowing up in the valley below, but it remained sunny and warm at the hut. Most of the rest of us took the opportunity of a lazy afternoon around camp to have a dip in the stream and to wash some clothes. An ideal place for this is just above the hut where a waterfall cascades into a deep pool. The water was very cold from melting snow higher up, but standing under the waterfall made for an invigorating power shower.



Though nominally Muslim, apparently the Berbers, especially the younger ones, are not particularly religious.

However, each afternoon at the Toubkal hut Brahim found a prominent flat rock where he alternately stood and knelt facing Mecca and offering prayers to Allah.



What scree-running does to your boots!

By 5 o'clock there was even more cloud swirling up to the level of the hut, and just after the sun had set the fairly strong northerly breeze reversed in a matter of twenty minutes and it turned very cold again. We had our couscous dinner at 7.30 and by 8.30 we were in our sleeping bags.

**The summit bivouac - by Simon Duffy.** We left camp in the middle of the afternoon and arrived on the summit of Toubkal with plenty of time to enjoy the spectacular views. After enlarging the bivouac site next to the summit triangle to cope with the large number of us, we sat under the triangle to eat our supper. To reduce weight we hadn't brought stoves to the summit and it was a cold supper of the bread, cheese and tinned meat that we normally had for mountain lunches.

Sunset was preceded by a huge flock of hundreds of moths flying overhead, presumably following the dying rays by flying upwards as high as they could. The sunset itself was magnificent, with the horizontal rays throwing the mountains into sharp relief above valleys filled with cloud. Supper was followed by a group photo session, after which it quickly became very cold, so we retired into our sleeping bags to monitor the satellites and count shooting stars.

In the morning the sun rose quickly and melted the frost on our sleeping bags in just a few minutes. Breakfast and another 4000 m peak beckoned, so we promptly packed and headed straight back down to camp. Trek's highest ever bivouac will be hard to beat, both in terms of its height and the superb sunset and dawn.

<b>Times:</b>	Toubkal	2-00	2-00		<b>Distance:</b>	6 km	<b>Ascent:</b>	980 m
	Toubkal hut	1-10	3-10	(5-10)			<b>Descent:</b>	980 m



The first of the summit party, no doubt having taken advantage of the scree runs for a quick descent, arrived in camp just as we were about to begin breakfast at 7.00, and the back-markers, pottering down more carefully, arrived at 7.30.

View down the Mizane valley from our campsite below the Toubkal hut



Just ten lads opted for the day's excursion to Ouanoukrim, including six of the hard men who had spent the night on Toubkal. The weather continued with its ideal combination of clear skies and cool breeze as we set off at 8.45 towards Tizi n'Ouagane at the head of the Mizane valley. Much of the higher stream bed was filled with snow, but the path keeps high on the western side and climbs without difficulty to the col where we arrived at 10.15.

The initial route up the ridge is an interesting scramble, steep in places but easy to follow and with no real difficulty. It passes to the right of a prominent rock finger and descends a little at one point before climbing again to emerge onto the more gentle boulder slopes leading up to Ras Ouanoukrim. It was then a laborious trudge along the edge of the cliffs overlooking the Mizane valley (where we saw a golden eagle soaring), to arrive at the summit at 11.10.



Toubkal and the Mizane valley from the ridge leading to Ras Ounoukrim

The route down to the col and up the stony slope to Timsguida Ouanoukrim is obvious and easy, and it took just 15 minutes to reach the second summit. According to Simon's altimeter the drop to the col was 55 m and with a horizontal separation of 500 m, the two summits are probably sufficiently distinct to have been classed as separate Munros had they been in Scotland.

The broad, flat, stony top of Timsguida is undistinguished but the views are fine, particularly looking across to Toubkal, and it was an opportunity for the 'Toubkal bivvy boys' to take a photo which included all three of the 4000 m tops they had stood on that morning.





On the summit of Timguida Ouanoukrim with Ras Ouanoukrim on the left and Toubkal on the right

We collected the packs we had left at the col between Ras and Timguida, and skirted the rock and scree flanks of Ras to head directly for the point at which the ridge leads off the summit plateau (which wouldn't be an easy place to find in poor visibility). Some care was needed negotiating the scramble down to Tizi n'Ouagane but there were no problems and from the col everyone made their own way back to camp in just one leg.

We avoided the path this time and went down the valley bottom where the gently sloping snowfields made for a quick descent, though the snow was too soft and rutted for good glissading. Mohammed and the leaders arrived back at 1.30 and the stragglers 15 minutes later. We had again completed the day's walk by lunch time and after the usual superb salad we had some re-packing to do for the final two days walking.



The scramble down the ridge back to Tizi n'Ouagane

The direct route back to Aroumd is about three hours down the tourist track in the Mizane valley, but our route was to go over Tizi n'Tadat into the Ouarzane valley and then round to Aroumd via Tizi Mzik. This two-day section could have been omitted had we needed a rest day for illness or bad weather. However, we had completed the route so far according to plan, and although there had been some minor stomach upsets and a few blisters, we were all fit for this last section.

The route to Tizi n'Tadat is much too steep and rough for mules, which, having brought up our supplies had been back in Aroumd for the previous two days. We would have to carry reasonably full rucksacks and do some real 'backpacking' for a change. The weather had been so settled that we decided to leave the tents behind to be taken back to Aroumd by the mules with the other spare kit.

It was the last night that Mike was with us. Before we had booked our Trek with him he had made arrangements to lead another school group in the Himalayas, and he had to return to England to join them. However, he had made arrangements with another Exodus leader, Alan Keohane, who was between expeditions, to join us for the last two days of the Trek and to oversee our transfer back to Agadir. Alan arrived in camp as darkness was beginning to fall, having walked up from Aroumd.

<b>Times:</b>	Tizi n'Ouagane	1-20	1-20	<b>Distance:</b>	9 km	<b>Ascent:</b>	970 m
	Ras Ouanoukrim	40	2-00			<b>Descent:</b>	970 m
	Timguida Ouanoukrim	15	2-15				
	Tizi n'Ouagane	25	2-40				
	Toubkal hut	50	3-30 (4-45)				



<b>Monday 13th July</b>	<b>Trek via</b>	<b>Tamsoult Tizi n'Tadat</b>	<b>2275 3740</b>
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So this was it - real back-packing for a change! No mules to carry the heavy gear, no muleteers to peel the vegetables, no Brahim to cook for us all. But we still cheated: no tents, no stoves, and only the lightest of food supplies. The weather had been so reliable that in spite of the billowing cloud during the two previous afternoons we felt confident about leaving the tents behind.

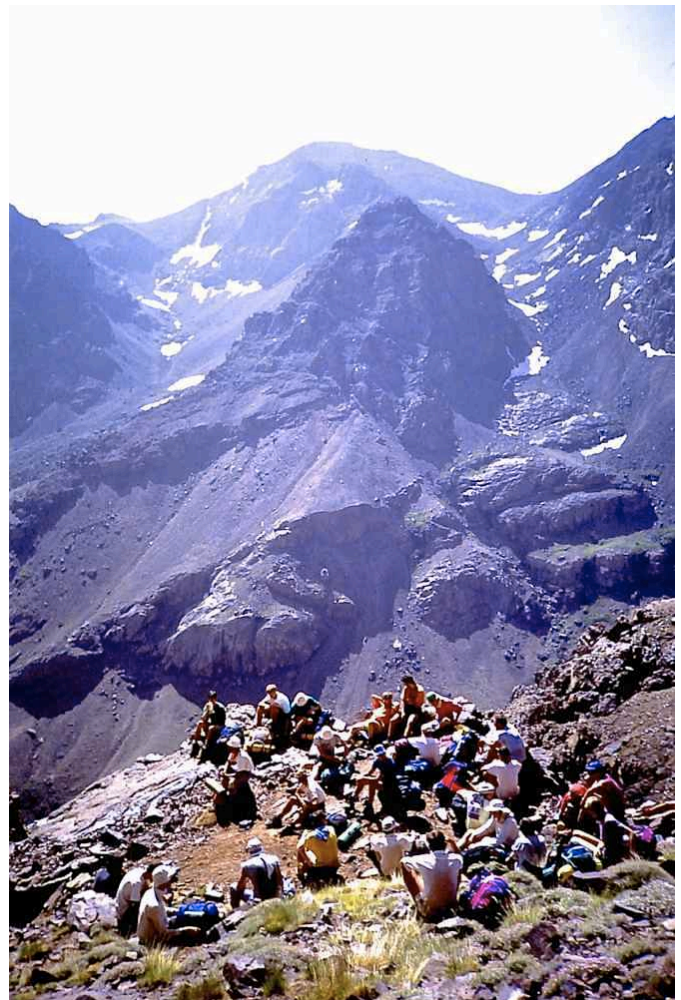
When I had asked Mike about the availability in Morocco of cartridges for our gas stoves for the final night, he had said that stoves wouldn't be needed as there would be plenty of wood available at Tamsoult. So wood fires it was to be (for the first time on Trek for a very long time). We left the tents with our kit-bags to be collected by mule and set off at 8.30 with our rucksacks containing just our usual walking clothes and waterproofs, plus Karrimats and sleeping bags and a set of billies per 'tent' group.

Robin Collomb's guide describes the ascent to Tizi n'Tadat as 'very rough and exhausting because of its continual steepness'. As it gains 500 m in about the same horizontal distance it certainly is very hard work and it involves some serious scrambling, but nowhere was so tricky as to give me serious reservations about proceeding. There are only odd traces of a 'path' and finding the best line of ascent up the steep shattered rock of the gully wasn't easy. We were grateful for the experience of Mohammed who chose a line which avoided most of the worst sections, and he led the ascent very slowly.

We went more or less straight up the gully, making short zig-zags, occasionally crossing snow patches and scrambling up several rocky pitches. Much of it was quite loose with stonefall a threat, the worst being a steep scree chute near the top which we had to cross with great care.



Leg-stop by a huge snow bank



Leg-stop with a view of Toubkal



We had three ten-minute stops on the ascent and arrived at the dramatically sharp col with the Tadat pinnacle towering above at 10.50. The view back across the Mizane valley to the huge mass of Toubkal was very impressive, with the whole of our ascent route clearly visible.



View of Toubkal from Tizi n'Tadat  
The ascent route to Tizi n'Toubkal is to the right of the summit  
and Tizi n'Ouanoums is the rocky col further to the right



View of the head of the Mizane valley with Tizi n'Ouanoums on the left,  
Tizi n'Ouagane in the centre, and Ouanoukrim just visible  
over the nearer rock ridge on the right



The Tadat pinnacle from Tizi n'Tadat  
with Biguinoussene beyond



The descent from the col was equally steep and loose for about 10 m before we met an obvious path which contours across the steep north slopes of Biguinoussene to go over a col in its north ridge at about the same level. We then traversed north for about 50 m below the west cliffs of the north ridge before descending an impossibly steep looking couloir. There seemed to be no safe way down, but Mohammed's experience again enabled him to pick out a safe route through the shifting scree, boulders and rock outcrops. It was the most difficult section of our whole route.



The route to the col in the middle distance goes along the top of the scree on the left



The tricky descent from the col

Once out of the couloir a splendid long scree run led down to the valley floor where we followed the stream, first on the left bank then on the right, to reach the Tazaghart (formerly Lepinay) hut at 1.00 for lunch. The hut was unoccupied and locked so we had lunch on the terrace with fine views of the waterfall just upstream.

From the hut an easy path descends in long hairpins down the eastern flanks of the valley before dropping more steeply down the gorge into which the impressive Cascades d'Irhoulidene fall.



Tent 4 in front of the waterfall by the Tazaghart hut



Cascades d'Irhoulidene  
The figures at the bottom give scale to the drop.



It was then just a short walk along the banks of the stream to the summer village of Tamsoult where we arrived at 3.30. The settlement is on a wide grassy spur between two streams, with terraced fields to the north-east, some byres and pens for sheep and goats, and a fairly steep wooded valley to the west. We selected a large gently sloping grassy field on which to bivouac then went off to find firewood.

Attempts at making a fire met with varying degrees of success. Some groups had the wood collected, the fire built and afternoon tea brewed within half an hour of arriving, but some were still fiddling around with stones to support the billy over smouldering wood producing clouds of smoke but little heat well over an hour later.



Bigger puffs needed Robert!



The masterchefs here are William Ashley, Steven Billington and Stuart Kistruck

However, we all eventually got a brew and in due course our ‘easy-cook’ rice meal. A clear and fast-flowing irrigation channel served as a convenient water supply for cooking and for an invigorating wash. During the late afternoon, for the first time in eleven days, the sky grew heavy with dark clouds, and our decision to bivouac began to look a foolish one. It rained enough to persuade us to re-pack our kit into rucksacks and for Alan to negotiate with a herdsman for us to shelter in a byre if necessary, but the threatened downpour didn’t come.

A thunderstorm did develop several miles away to the north-west, and the sprinkling we got soon stopped and it was a fine evening and night.

We ended our last evening in the mountains with a sing-song round a campfire and some lateral thinking problems set by Alan.



<b>Times:</b>	Tizi n'Tadat	1-40	1-40	<b>Distance:</b> 8 km	<b>Ascent:</b> 570 m
	Tazaghart hut	1-20	3-00		
	Tamsoult	50	3-50		
			(7-00)		
				<b>Descent:</b>	1500 m



**Tuesday 14th July**

**Trek  
via**

**Around  
Tizi Mzik**

**1950  
2489**

It had remained a dry and mild night and was another clear and cloudless morning.

Even though we had no tents to take down and not everybody bothered to make a fire for a morning brew-up (and the local Berber opened the irrigation ditch to allow water to run down the field we were on) we were slow getting away and didn't leave until 8.45.



We went down to cross the stream and then followed the easy mule trail which gradually ascends the juniper covered west flanks of Adrar el Hajj.

We arrived at Tizi Mzik at 10.30, where we met a small group of Belgians who had walked up from Around, only the third time we had met other foreigners on the whole route.





There was the possibility of climbing Adrar el Hajj from the col, but it is a big climb (650 m), the ridge didn't look very inviting, and it was then very hot, so we took the more tempting alternative of the quick descent to 'civilisation' in Aroumd.

On Tizi Mzik, with Imlil in the valley below, the Tanamrout ridge above it and Jbel Oukaimeden and Angour on the skyline



We went steeply down the stony track towards Imlil, then just after Azib Mzikene branched right along a path not shown on the maps which contours round the north-east ridge of Adrar el Hajj to join the dirt road from Imlil to Aroumd. It was now hotter than at any time since we left Marrakech, so we stopped for cool Cokes at a café as we entered the village, then crossed the river for the final weary climb to the house.



With the temperature at 35°C (95°F) in the shade, our final Berber lunch was served in the relatively cool upper dining room.

During the afternoon some lads made a shopping trip down to Imlil, and others made purchases from two 'salesmen' who were given permission to visit the house. One man was selling rocks and crystals, the other jewellery, and Lahcen had a stock of blankets for sale.

Haggling was again the order of the day, and as most lads were keen to spend some of the Dirhams that had been burning holes in their pockets for the last eleven days, business was brisk.





The rest of the afternoon was spent having showers, sorting out belongings (and deciding what items were no longer needed and could be left as gifts for the muleteers), packing, and consuming considerable amounts of fluids. The polythene sheets we had used under the groundsheets when camping at the hut were given to Brahim who was about to re-roof his house and said that the polythene would be ideal for the waterproof lining. The billies, now a sooty black from the wood fires, were also donated, together with surplus clothes and various other items from the lads, to be distributed amongst the muleteers and their families.

It was also time to settle the final drinks bill. The record went to Roger Naylor, whose total bill for 41 bottles of Coke, Fanta, water and beer came to £16. Happily the number of bottles that we had all signed up for tallied pretty well with the number Lahcen thought had been provided.

Dinner was served on the balcony under a clear sky and full moon. There was vegetable soup, a vegetable tagine accompanied by delicious mechoui (which we were told was roast goat, but it tasted like lamb), followed by melon. Grant Mitchell kindly said a few words of thanks to the staff and presented us with thoroughly undeserved but much appreciated presents.



After dinner we sat cross-legged round the edge of the dormitory and were entertained by the singing, drum playing and dancing of a group of Berber girls. Valiant attempts by Adrian to lead us in singing some songs of our own met with limited success!



Towards the end of the evening Mohammed and most of the muleteers joined us (some of them were by then in the mountains again) and the evening was rounded off by thanking them for their sterling support and good humour, and presenting them with a tip in thanks for their services.

<b>Times:</b>	Tizi Mzik	1-20	1-20		<b>Distance:</b>	11 km	<b>Ascent:</b>	400 m
	Around	1-25	2-45	(4-00)			<b>Descent:</b>	730 m





It was already 70°F when we rose at 6.00. We packed our bags to be taken down by mule and pick-up truck, said farewell to our hosts and set off for the 20 minute walk down to Imlil. The Berbers were already at work in the fields and carrying the hay bales along the path, and as we approached Imlil we passed a man skinning a sheep hanging by its hind legs from the bough of a tree.

Mike had booked breakfast for us at the Café Soleil, and we sat at tables under the trees by the river to have our omelettes, bread and cheese or jam and tea or coffee. Gift sellers bustled about trying to make a last sale, with prices getting lower as our departure became imminent, and they were prepared to barter for watches or anything else to make a sale. The minibuses arrived, our luggage was loaded and we set off at 9.15 for the 90-minute journey back to Marrakech.



Breakfast at the Café Soleil



One final purchase

The countryside through which the road between Asni and Marrakech passes is flat and arid, and would be inhospitable but for irrigation channels which carry water from the mountain streams out onto the plains. Some of these open culverts run parallel to the road and they form a focus for life in the area, with small clusters of houses, patches of cultivated fields and a few orchards all depending on this meagre water supply. They were also used by herdsmen to water their flocks and Berber women to do their washing.



It was 92°F when we arrived at the hotel, unloaded and checked in, though it was a little cooler inside the hotel. Most were content to cool off with a shower and rest before lunch, but some took up Alan's offer of a swim in a pool at a nearby hotel, and Simon and Graham went on an expedition into the souks. Graham hadn't been feeling very well, but when he came back looked and felt even worse after an unpleasant encounter with some unofficial 'guides'. These 'guides' or touts continually pester to be allowed to guide you round the souks so that they can direct you to shops where they will get a large commission on any purchase you make (at a correspondingly higher price). They can be very insistent, and when their services are declined they can become quite abusive.

Lunch was of the same high standard as we had come to expect: home made soup, a beautiful piece of steak with plenty of chips, with a choice of sweet to follow. Hassan was around again, good-humouredly offering his jellabas, scarves, blankets and bongo drums for sale. His cheeky banter made him very good entertainment value, and as well as selling he was prepared to barter or part exchange almost anything, and T-shirts and trainers figured in his deals.

During the afternoon those who wanted to buy presents in the souks formed themselves into 'interest' groups of about six to hire an official guide from the hotel to accompany them and to take them where they wanted to go.

Having an official guide is a deterrent to the unofficial touts. Simon, Adrian and I ventured out without a guide, and although pestered by touts we didn't have too much trouble. Having been twice before, Simon knew his way around and we soon found the shops we wanted and made our purchases.



The souks are the most fascinating place I have ever been to. The maze of narrow streets thronging with people is packed with a multitude of shops selling all manner of goods and artifacts: ceramics, turned wood, musical instruments, jellabas, fabrics, wrought ironwork, motorcycle spares, local 'fast' food, meat covered in flies, the list goes on and on. Many of the shops are small, dirty and dingy, but some are smart and on a much grander scale, all seemingly thrown together in a great disorganised patchwork, and permeated by the smells of freshly turned wood, coffee, spices, perfumes ... and mule droppings! The only way to appreciate it is to see it and to smell it.

The authorities must have been aware of the deterrent effect of the touts on tourists, since we saw pairs of policemen at several places, and the touts disappeared when the police approached. The shopkeepers were less of a threat. They were very keen to encourage you in to look round, but if you really couldn't find what you wanted escape was fairly easy. However, if you did show a genuine interest in an article they were very persistent in preventing you from leaving. They would say how fine the goods were and what a good bargain you would be getting and ask you to raise your price a little more, and lower theirs just a little to tempt you to think again.

Dinner was à-la-carte, orders having been taken at lunchtime, and shortly afterwards most people retired to do their final packing and get an early night in preparation for a very early start the following morning.



The Koutoubia minaret  
at sunset



The night porter gave us our alarm call at 2.30 a.m. and by 3.15 all the lads had been dragged from their beds, the minibuses loaded and we set off for Agadir. At 5.15 we stopped for breakfast at the same café we used on the journey out, just as dawn was breaking and the full moon setting, and in a further 1½ hours we reached Agadir airport. One of the buses had been stopped by a police patrol and fined on some technicality that no-one understood, but apparently this is a normal practice by which the police supplement their incomes.



Dawn at the transport café, with the full moon setting

Presumably the large and luxurious airport terminal building was constructed as a matter of national prestige rather than for practical considerations; our party formed the majority of passengers in the building (though we were outnumbered by an army of airport staff) and there were scheduled to be only half a dozen flights in and out of the airport all day.

At check-in, a baggage handler had started loading our luggage onto a conveyor before the supervisor responsible for checking it had arrived. The ensuing dispute between them was resolved by Alan offering the supervisor a sum of money to compensate him for his wounded pride, another example of 'supplementary benefit'!

We took off at 10.45 and flew low enough over the Atlas to be able to make out the peaks we had climbed, and touched down at Tangier an hour later. The onward flight was smooth, the train journey uneventful and we arrived back in Manchester at 9.40 to end our journey as we began, staggering along the platform under heavy loads, this time to be greeted by our families.



The main Atlas peaks on the skyline



All trekked out!



## SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

A Trek to Morocco was chosen to offer something different from and more exotic than our traditional back-packing expeditions to the Alps or Pyrenees. It turned out to be extremely successful and enjoyable and exceeded all my expectations.

### The Atlas Mountains

To be fair, the Atlas mountains are not as spectacular as the Alps with their snow, glaciers and towering peaks. Nevertheless, they are impressively big mountains with some fine rock peaks and ridges. However, it was the aspects of Moroccan life, the souks of Marrakech, meeting the Berbers and observing their primitive way of life that made this Trek so special.

### Route

I researched trekking routes in the Toubkal area which were offered by several companies and drew up a provisional route based on them to include several summit ascents. With his local knowledge, Mike suggested some improved variations (such as including the Tiourdiou / Kassaria Gorge loop) and some extra summits. It is a route he has subsequently done with other school groups, and called it *'The Manchester Route'*.

The route was well graded, varied and interesting, with a good mix of walks through Berber villages and ascents of the big peaks. To allow for the heat and high altitude the route had been planned so as not to be too demanding. Although there were some long, hard days, the fresh mountain air and cooling breezes made the walking no more strenuous than on hot days in the Alps, and with carrying lighter packs than when back-packing our walking times were fast, and some days quite short. On only two days were we significantly behind Naismith's times: the walk up the Tinzer river (where the many river crossings slowed us down), and the long and testing scramble over Tizi n'Tadat.

Although it was very hot in Marrakech, and when we returned to Aroumd, temperatures in the mountains were ideal for walking, and because the route was well graduated to assist acclimatisation, the ascents of the big peaks at the end were accomplished with relative ease.

### Health Matters

Any fears that we had about health, intense heat or high altitude problems turned out to be largely unfounded. There were a few occasional upset stomachs and some bad blisters, but overall we remained remarkably fit and healthy. This was no doubt due in a large part to the research done by Simon and the comprehensive advice he gave about vaccinations and general health matters.

### Mule Support

Arrangements with the mules and camping worked splendidly. Brahim worked wonders on just two Gaz stoves, and the meals he produced were excellent. The muleteers were always willing and good company, and their singing most entertaining. Mohammed's navigating was faultless, and the pace he set always took into account the nature and steepness of the terrain and how well we were coping with it.

### Party

The lads were good humoured and cooperative and they managed the big climbs very well. They simply got on with what was required willingly and cheerfully, and there were no complaints when lunch was six hours after breakfast, or dinner was very late.

Although Simon had been to Morocco before, it is culturally and logistically so different from Europe that a Trek there is not something we would have been prepared to organise ourselves, and without Mike Wynne there would have been no Morocco Trek. His experience, expertise, local knowledge and contacts were the biggest factors which made Trek run like clockwork and turn out to be such a huge success.

Apart from flying directly to Marrakech, I can think of no variations in the overall arrangements or our walking route that would have been an improvement on what we did, and spending some time in Marrakech is a must for any visit to Morocco. When the present generation of trekkers has left school I would certainly recommend another Trek to Morocco on similar lines.

Thanks to Simon, Adrian and Graham for their encouragement, help and support both before and during the Trek.

Allan Witton November 1992



## MARRAKECH

We arrived at the hotel at 2 a.m. and fell asleep to unfamiliar sounds drifting on the warm night air: the clip-clop of hooves, the whine of mopeds and the wail of prayers from the nearby 12th century Koutoubia Mosque.

Our first day began with a mule-drawn carriage ride through the Medina, the old city, during which we began to see for ourselves what a fascinating city of contrasts Marrakech is: the tiny shops and workshops; the bustle of traffic ranging from hand-drawn carts, pack-mules and bicycles to modern Mercedes cars; the immense range of clothing, smart western dress, women in veils, youths in jeans, colourful Berber women wrapped in bright skirts, scarves and blouses, men in jellabas and turbans, squatting beggars in rags with outstretched hands. The whole of life seems to dwell on the streets, trading, begging, making and mending, living and barely living. The sights, the sounds, the smells are of Africa, so different from anything in Europe.

We drew up at the gateway to the Saadian tombs and within seconds the souvenir-sellers descended on us with their jewellery, blankets, jellabas and curved knives. Inside was a cool and tranquil haven from the rush and bustle outside as we walked amongst the gardens to view the exquisite temples where the Saadian imperial family lie buried, buildings decorated in ornate plaster, carved cedarwood and glittering paint; intricate designs on a huge scale, awe-inspiring with their attention to detail.

Our carriages then took us through arches and gateways, along some of the seven miles of crenellated ramparts, where children ran alongside, turning cartwheels, pleading for Dirhams, and old men squatted in the shade of stunted bushes waiting fatalistically for something to happen.

We left the carriages to follow our guide back through the souks to the hotel, first passing through the open-air tanneries, alongside mounds of hair, then between pits where skins soaked in evil-smelling liquids. Children homed in on us, begging, demanding money and attempting to pick our pockets. All around were little ragged boys with pleading faces, tiny girls with babies on their hips, eyes that pierced, empty palms, hoping and hopeless.

We followed our guide through a maze of alleyways, where we again ran the gauntlet of persistent street traders, to the old Koranic school. Here in the Middle Ages students lived and studied in a network of cells around a central courtyard; a beautiful building of pillars and arches with walls and ceilings finely decorated with intricate carving and flowing Arabic script, while beautiful tiles were set in the floors. The place enveloped us in a sense of serenity, well away from the chaos of the streets, and we drew parallels with Oxbridge Colleges and their own religious origins.

Our next visit was to the apothecary and spice shop, where snake skins hung from the ceiling and dried lizards, sea-urchins, roots and powders were stored in glass jars which covered the shelves from floor to ceiling. We sat on benches while jars were opened, passed round and sniffed: spice-mixes, saffron, aphrodisiacs, amber, musk, mandrake-root, Spanish fly, there really was something for every taste.

Our guide moved swiftly on past blind and crippled beggars, basket sellers, drum-makers, wood-carvers and into a dingy emporium worthy of Charles Dickens' London. We were ushered up a rickety staircase to a landing where a man squatted spinning wool on a contraption made from an old bicycle wheel; in a cramped side-room carpets were being woven on hand-loom. Finally we reached an Aladdin's cave of carpets and rugs, walls of colour designed to induce trance-states and part the unwary tourist from wads of banknotes. Carpets and rugs were rolled out in a growing mound before our eyes. Those of us interested in making a purchase did our haggling, and although some felt they had paid over the odds, most of us came away feeling we had struck a reasonable bargain for our carpets, blankets, woollen jackets and scarves.

We eventually emerged from the souks to cross the main square Djemma el Fna, the heart of traditional Marrakech and teeming with people and traders' stalls, and arrived back at the hotel for lunch followed by our onward journey.

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We returned to Marrakech from the mountains eager to expose skin to running water and thus distinguish between bronzing and ingrained dust. Whilst some staff adopted Arab dress and attempted to explore the souks 'incognito', a minder, a former Moroccan boxing champion, was employed to guide the boys through the maze of markets and help influence over-inflated prices of souvenirs in a downward direction. The wisdom of this became evident when staff in jellabas and sandals required rescuing from the attentions of a persistently over-familiar tout.

Marrakech is both exhausting and seductively irresistible: I for one could not sleep amidst the constant clatter from the street, the chaos of jumbled images and unanswered questions, as well as a sense of warmth still lingering from our contact with the kindly Berbers.

A. P. Dobson



## ON TREK IN THE ATLAS

A bumpy two-hour drive south from Marrakech brought us to the road-head village of Imlil, set in a surprisingly green and wooded valley beneath towering, barren brown mountains. The short walk up to the Berber village of Aroumd gave us our first glimpses of the primitive Berber lifestyle that we would find so fascinating for the next eleven days: a man skinning a sheep hanging by its hind legs from the bough of a tree; children tending cattle; women cutting hay between walnut groves.

Aroumd is a bleak looking village of grey stone buildings with flat earth-covered roofs packed together and stepped into the steep, stony hillside above the green irrigated fields in the valley below. Here in a village house we spent a night at each end of our Trek, enjoying a warm welcome, unlimited hot, sweet mint tea, dinner by lantern light, and sleeping on the roof beneath a very black sky. We awoke early, packed quickly, left the muleteers to load the tents and supplies onto the mules, and set off behind our guide Mohammed out into the Atlas.

The first three days took us east, each day crossing to the next valley via a col from which we made a summit ascent: Tanamrout, a short but steep climb; the 10,000-foot peaks of Jbel Oukaïmeden, reached after a tricky scramble along an arête, and Jbel Attar, where we saw scorpions and met a herdsman in biblical robes tending his herd of goats.

The mules would leave camp after us, when their burdens had been loaded, and overtake us during the day. On days when we stayed on the main mule trails this would happen at lunchtime, and our cook Brahim took great delight in laying before us a delicious spread consisting of meats, fish and cheese accompanied by a huge mixed salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, red onions, beans and chick-peas, with flat cakes of bread baked over a wood fire, and melon to follow. Though we had no language in common the muleteers were good company, and often entertained us by bursting into rhythmical wailing songs.

This route also took us through the Berber villages of Tamatert, Ouaneskra, Tacheddirt, Timichchi and Tiourdiou, where houses are clustered together on the steep mountainsides to leave the lower slopes and valley floor for cultivation. Water is diverted from the river to flow along a network of irrigation channels which distribute it to successively lower terraces. It was amazing to see what a range of crops could be harvested from such an inherently hostile environment: maize, wheat, barley, potatoes and other root crops; there were even orchards of apples in places, and dotted amongst everything were the walnut trees. The contrast between the vibrant green crops of the irrigated terraces and the bare, arid mountain slopes above is one of the most lasting impressions of the Atlas.

As we approached each village inquiring faces appeared at windows and children scampered down to meet us, some to follow us ("Dirham Monsieur?....Stylo?....Bonbon?"), but some, especially in the more remote villages, just to sit and stare, timid and wide-eyed, at these strangers from outside. At Tiourdiou young children giggled at our white skin as we bathed in the river while their older sisters and mothers scurried down the steep, rocky paths carrying huge bundles of newly-cut hay. Here we bivouacked in preparation for a dawn start up the steep-sided Tinzer valley and through the knee-deep waters of the Kassaria Gorge.

We were now amongst the very highest peaks, and half the party spent the most arduous day of Trek (11 miles, with 6,000 feet of ascent) traversing the long ridge of Ifrouane, Trek's first 4000-metre peak. There were superb views of the rugged High Atlas peaks and south to the heat haze of the Sahara. After a 4,500-foot descent to Amsouza on the Saharan side of the range, and sharing a bag of 'bonbons' from the Ifni Cafe with a delighted group of village children, we began the long 6,000-foot climb towards Toubkal. Refreshed by a bivouac on the rocky shore of the turquoise Lac d'Ifni, and a swim in its cooling waters, we crossed the dramatic 12,000-foot Ouanous col to set up camp for three nights at the foot of Toubkal.

From this 10,500-foot camp we accomplished ascents of the two highest peaks in the area with relative ease after our long approach walk and acclimatisation. There was a choice of ascents of Toubkal, at 4167 metres (13,700 feet) the highest peak in North Africa. The morning party set off early and returned for lunch in camp and a lazy afternoon bathing in the icy meltwater stream. The afternoon party stayed on the summit to see the sun set and rise again, and were down for breakfast followed by that morning's ascent of Ouanoukrim (4088 metres).

After a steep scramble over the 12,300-foot Tadat col and a bivouac at Tamsoult where we cooked on wood fires, we returned to Aroumd for a Berber feast of roast goat, and to be entertained by village girls singing and dancing in their colourful traditional costume.

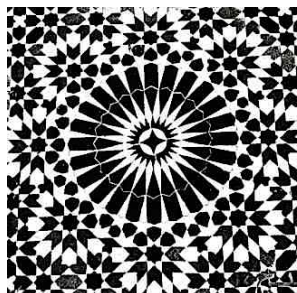
L. A. Witton



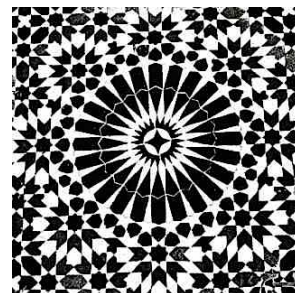
Once again the sparkling wit, perceptive observation and finely tuned literary skills of MGS trekkers were almost entirely absent from this year's contributions to the diary. However the offerings have been censored, edited, expanded, spell-checked and otherwise rendered into a moderately readable account of life on Trek in Morocco.

It was a record breaking Trek, with records tumbling daily like kitbags from the back of a mule. Many of the long-standing records were smashed by the sheer strength, determination and athleticism of this year's elite group of trekkers, and others were due to circumstances beyond our control.

So here it is, the true account of life on Trek '92:



## THE MOROCCO DIARY



**2nd July**  
**THE ROUTE TO MARRAKECH**  
**by LAW**

*"... twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four. Right, we're all here, let's go."* And so the first MGS trek to Africa got underway with a fifty metre stagger along the platform at Piccadilly to board the Euston train. The first day was an easy 2000 miles, by train, underground, plane and minibus, with not much walking between. Short though it was, the walking bit was quite hard. Carrying rucksack, hand luggage, kitbag with masses of food, and for tent leaders a whole tent as well, we jostled and bumped, struggled and sweated our way up and down crowded stairs and escalators, but we made it to Heathrow ahead of schedule. At the Royal Air Maroc check-in desk we were considerably relieved, not only of our burdens, but also to find out that the baggage allowance had been increased to 30 kg each and we were all well within that.

A scheduled two-hour wait became three as the flight was delayed, but eventually there was general relief as we headed off to board the plane. There was more specific relief for James Marks whose rucksack had fallen off the loading truck and could be seen on the ground some distance from the aircraft, but then a baggage-handler spotted it, rescued it and took it to the hold.

The flight was smooth, the cabin service from the immaculately turned out Arab stewards was friendly, and the food, accompanied by a choice of drinks including a very pleasant Moroccan red wine, was excellent. Before we knew it we were flying in low to clear the sand dunes and touch down at Tangier airport as dusk began to fall. We made the hour's onward flight to Agadir under a glorious crimson sunset, but touched down in total darkness. Mike and Robin, together with three mini-buses and their drivers, were waiting to whisk us off into the black Moroccan night and through the western Atlas.

Attempts at sleeping were interrupted by sharp bends in the road, the glare of headlights from oncoming lorries, and the need to keep offering the driver sweets to make sure he didn't nod off too.

After two hours we pulled into the Moroccan equivalent of a transport cafe; a chance to stretch our legs and sample our first mint tea. The cafe was by the roadside in the middle of nowhere, and was much smarter than any of the houses we had seen on the way. It presumably owed its existence to the fact that it was half way along the tourist trail between Agadir and Marrakech.

We arrived at the hotel in the early hours tired, stiff and thirsty, and after a cooling glass of fresh orange juice we flopped into bed to let sleep work its wonders on travel-jaded bodies.



I'm unsure as to whether I actually slept, for the night seemed filled with unfamiliar noises out there in the darkened streets of Marrakech. Any dreams I had were punctuated with the clip-clop of hooves, the whine of mopeds and the chanting of prayers from the nearby Koutoubia Mosque.

After all our anxieties about disease-ridden food and dodgy water, breakfast seemed refreshingly normal and civilised: freshly squeezed orange juice, fresh bread, butter, marmalade and delicious coffee. Wayward stomachs were reassured in preparation for what was for many a gut-wrenching experience. Marrakech is after all no European city, sanitised and made presentable to even the most queasy; it is by contrast a city where the whole of life dwells on the streets, squatting, trading, begging, diseased and dying, crippled and starving, making, mending, living and barely living.

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On leaving the calm security of the hotel we were hustled into horse drawn carriages for a drive through the Medina, the old city, and now the chaotic nature of Marrakech began to unfold around us: the tiny shops and workshops, the squatting beggars with outstretched arms and hands, the bustle of donkey-carts and bicycles, the immense range of clothing, women in veils, youths in jeans, colourful Berber women wrapped in bright skirts, scarves and blouses, men in jellabas and turbans.

We drew up at a gateway close by which storks had made their nests on high towers. Within seconds the souvenir-sellers descended on us with their stuffed camels, belts and curved knives. Lesson one: keep moving! We moved pretty fast through the archway, down a narrow passage and into the tranquillity of the gardens of the Saadian tombs. Whatever else the Saadian kings did, they died well and left magnificent surroundings to their graves, buildings decorated in ornate plaster, carved cedarwood and glittering paint. The designs were intricate, abstract and on a huge scale, walls, doors and ceilings carved with patterns of finest tracery, awe-inspiring with their attention to detail. Kings, wives and concubines, each had a hall for their tombs. Did the king have 64 concubines, or was it more? Anyway, as our guide remarked, he was a "lucky man." I gather that nowadays Moroccan Muslim men are limited to a mere four wives and as many concubines as they can comfortably support.

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We struggled back to our carriages through the souvenir and trinket sellers who had now regrouped for another onslaught. Lesson two: the best price is the one you will get as you are leaving. I handed over

100 Dirhams (£7) to a man for a striped jellaba just as our carriage was setting off. He was not a happy man but it was a fair price despite being a quarter of what he was originally asking. Lesson three: don't get smug: where one man fails, the next will surely know how to rip you off. This was to come later that morning.

The carriages continued through arches and gateways, along the old city walls, past bare earth where boys played football, and animal skins lay drying in the sun. Children ran alongside, turning cartwheels, pleading for Dirhams. Old men squatted in the shade of stunted bushes waiting fatalistically for something to happen.

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Our carriages stopped, we dismounted, and we were led past waiting donkeys through the tanneries; first alongside mounds of hair, then between pits where skins soaked in evil-smelling liquids. Children homed in on us from all sides, wanting, begging, demanding money. The zips on my trouser pockets were undone by groping hands. All around were little ragged boys with pleading faces, tiny girls with babies on their hips, eyes that pierced, empty palms, hoping and hopeless.

We continued on foot behind our guide through a maze of alleyways, then through a stone archway into the cool passage which led to the old Koranic school, where students lived and studied in the Middle Ages in a network of cells around a central courtyard. Once again doorways, walls and ceilings were finely decorated with intricate carving and flowing Arabic script, while beautiful tiles were set in the floors. The place enveloped us in a sense of serenity, well away from the chaos of the streets, and we drew parallels with Oxbridge Colleges and their own religious origins.

Our next visit was to an apothecary and spice shop, where snake skins hung from the ceiling and dried lizards, sea-urchins, roots and powders were stored in a multitude of glass jars which covered shelves extending from floor to ceiling. We sat on benches while jars were opened, passed round and sniffed: spice-mixes, saffron, aphrodisiacs, amber, musk, mandrake-root, Spanish fly .... I won't say who bought what, but there really was something for every taste.

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Our guide moved swiftly on past blind and crippled beggars, basket sellers, drum-makers, wood-carvers and into a dingy emporium worthy of Charles Dickens' London. We were ushered up a rickety staircase to a landing where a man squatted spinning wool on a bicycle wheel; in a cramped side-room carpets were being woven on hand-loom. Finally we reached an Aladdin's cave of carpets and rugs, walls of colour designed to induce trance-states and part the unwary tourist from wads of banknotes.



Mint tea was served, doubtless laced with something to loosen the stranglehold of conventional monetarist thinking. Lesson four: the tea is bait. Carpets and rugs were rolled out in a growing mound before our eyes, and Berber carpets are certainly a thousand times more enchanting than figures on a bank-statement. We were invited to say which we liked, price being of course irrelevant at this stage. Our carpet-trader had a limited but amusing line in sales-patter: "The more you try, the more you get." (translated later on Trek into "The more you try, the more you pay") and "The more you wash it, the more you like it." (Translated later into "The more you wash it, the more the colour runs out"). Washed rugs are sold as old rugs; it's amazing what a bit of donkey dung can do for a price, old rugs being far more valuable than new. English carpet warehouses have much to learn about inducing premature ageing.

Graham, Allan and I all came out with rugs and a sense that we could have paid rather less if we had not been with a group and had been free to walk out when we chose. Lesson five: being in a group increases the amount of time they have for persuading you to raise your price. Lesson six: Once you have quoted a price you can only raise it, never lower it. Reassuringly, many of the boys were learning the same lessons in the corridor outside the carpet room, by paying over the odds for scarves and woollen jackets. Our guide was all smiles as he led us out of the rug store, presumably totting up the percentage cut he would be receiving later that day.

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Lunch back in the hotel brought us into closer contact with Moroccan cuisine: meat balls and vegetables cooked and served in a brown earthenware pot with a tapering funnel as a lid. Vegetarians meet with little understanding and I was offered plain spaghetti with a bottle of tomato ketchup. Melon completed the meal, chilled crisp pink water-melon and a sweet yellow melon which oozed juice at every bite.

I had really had enough of Marrakech by the time the minibuses arrived in the early afternoon. For one thing it was far too hot, for another the flies were becoming very persistent. Our rucksacks were lashed to the minibus roof and the journey up into the High Atlas began, first along a dead straight road across the brown stony plain. Irrigation channels ran beside the road bringing water down from the hills; brick-makers mixed the water with earth to create piles of red-brown bricks which lay baking in the sun; donkeys hauled rickety wooden carts back from the market, and herds of goats grazed the rough verges. Gradually we began to climb up brownish valleys, along a fast-flowing river and round narrow hairpins. The road became a land-rover track of rough stones where brightly-dressed Berber women stood and chatted.

Walnut trees lined the track, and everywhere faces watched us; children mind goats and sheep at every turn. Our driver showered water over our overheating engine, and then suddenly we were there at the end of the road, Imlil, a small village, a few shops and a cafe, highly sophisticated in comparison with what we were to find for the next ten days.

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We walked the next couple of miles along stony paths through a mesh of irrigation channels, walnut groves, tiny flat-roofed houses, and up through the boulder-strewn ginnels of Aroumd to a village house owned by the Exodus trekking company. Our luggage arrived on the backs of mules after a precipitous journey over a dirt track on a camionette, a mini lorry.

Berbers took charge of our food, took charge of the cooking, offered drinks of sweet mint tea; warm, rugged men in a whole cross-section of dress styles: Lahcen in his dark suit, others in jellabas and turbans. We exchanged words of French and shook hands a lot, smiled and nodded, apologising for our ignorance and uncertainty.

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The house is on three floors and mostly open to the elements. Down below is a small yard where we entered, two dingy toilets and two cold showers. On the next floor there is lots of open space, a kitchen, a couple of storerooms and a dormitory, and above there is yet more roof space, a large verandah and a cosy room full of sofas and rugs.

Eyes watched us from every rooftop, inquisitive and friendly, children scampered round our doorway hoping for sweets, and down in the village's fields the harvest of corn was being gathered, then carried on the backs of teenage girls up to the village for threshing and storage. Below us by the river women took grain to a water-powered mill for grinding, other women washed clothes whilst tiny children played on rooftops next to precipitous edges.

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Mud and stone are the basic building materials in a Berber village, occasionally topped with concrete for protection against the rain. Windows are generally small and infrequent, floors the bare earth. Animals and people live close beside one another, though animal enclosures are often topped with thorns and brambles. Donkeys may well be tethered upstairs, in empty decaying shells of houses, or on rooftops, for much is topsy-turvy in a Berber village.

It goes dark early in Morocco, before eight o'clock, and we ate out in the cool of the mountain evening listening to cicadas and the rustle of feet in the dark alleyways all around us. Under the very black African sky it was easy to fall asleep after what had been an extremely long day.



I like it so far; gently downhill from the village then along the edge of this almost level irrigation channel under the first shady walnut trees, and the air's cooler than I thought it would be. I should be able to manage this rucksack since we've left the tents and all the food supplies back at the house to be loaded onto mules that will follow on behind us. Already the first Trek Record has been broken with this first visit to Morocco, and APD must have broken Record Number 2; surely no-one can have set out on a Trek before with such a tiny rucksack.

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It couldn't last! There was no shade for the climb up to the col Tizi n'Tamatert and in spite of a gentle breeze it was hot work. Ten minutes to rest here and decide whether to go on the optional excursion up Tanamrout. It doesn't look too far, and the rest of the day's walking is gently down the other side of the col to the campsite, so I think I'll give it a go.

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I didn't care for that very much. Going up was hard enough. It was steeper than it looked from the col and with a mixture of tussocky vegetation and loose, pebbly scree, getting a good boot grip wasn't easy. At least the view of the big peaks to the south was impressive. However, coming down was even worse. It was OK for those mountain goats in the party to go bounding down, but I was going to make sure I got down in one piece even if it did take me ten minutes longer than anyone else.

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This is better. A nice grassy campsite, a superb lunch, and plenty of time to relax in the warm afternoon sunshine. I see GES has got the right idea. He's already picked his spot on a bank at just the right angle, laid out his Karrimat and blown up his travel pillow and is engrossed in his book. I think I might give that a try when we've got the tent up. I think I'll give the stream a miss though, it looks cold, especially under the waterfall where Nick Hughes is having a shower.

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It's turned quite cool now it's dark; I'm glad I put my fleece on before dinner. In spite of the splendid lunch I'm certainly ready for dinner; it must be all this fresh air. Brahim seems to have the cooking well organised. It takes a long time to cook for thirty-five of us on just two Gaz stoves but the results are excellent. I can't see what it is very well in the dark, but it's tasty, with lots of fresh vegetables and there's enough for seconds too!

Trek 92's first night in the notorious orange tents passed peacefully enough, so peacefully for some that they stayed too long in their cosy sleeping bags and found to their great disappointment that all the muesli had been eaten when they did emerge, and they had to fill up on bread and jam. Surprisingly everyone had remembered how the tents should be folded, and soon had them and their kit-bags packed for loading on the mules.

We set off up the Imenane valley to the Berber village of Tacheddirt, then turned sharply uphill to head for the col Tizi n'Addi. Our guide Mohammed led the ascent at a steady, comfortable pace, with two stops on the way up. However, experienced trekkers were somewhat put out by the absence of the traditional call of 'Two minutes!' as Mohammed's get-up-and-go style left some of them with rucksacks half-packed and oranges half-peeled.

On the final ascent to the col we were treated to our first sample of Berber singing which was to become a regular occurrence. As they drove the mules up towards the col the muleteers began a rich, clear wailing which echoed round the mountain, and was answered by muleteers on a lower path. Words and meaning if they existed at all were not apparent to us, but the sounds drifting on the light breeze had a haunting effect.

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On the other side of the col the mule trail led down through verdant pastures dotted with yellow and blue flowers. However, this was not the way **we** were going down, we were going **up** by the 'picturesque' ridge route to bag our first 3000-metre peak, Jbel Oukaïmeden. Before setting off, food was retrieved from packs on the mules and distributed one item per trekker to be carried to the summit where we would have lunch. This fairly simple instruction wasn't understood by Doug Dawson who started munching his way through a cucumber there and then! Aggrieved members of the party got their own back by pointing out to Doug that the cucumber hadn't been washed and suggesting that he would be struck with some dreadful illness within a few minutes.

The 'picturesque' ridge turned into an arête with some tricky scrambling at one point where Mohammed held onto more than one trembling hand. We reached the summit pretty exhausted. It had been a 1300-metre climb, it was six hours since we had eaten breakfast (Trek Record Number 3), and most of us had by now drunk all the water we had carried up from Tacheddirt. What was left of lunch was rapidly consumed in the shadow of the top pylon of a skiing chair lift (amazingly the village of Oukaïmeden is a winter ski resort!).



We left the summit in the opposite direction, directly towards the village, near which we could see the muleteers had set up camp. Perhaps camp was too close to the village, for the scent of 'civilisation' tempted many to investigate its delights.

Having given the group's postcards to a Norwegian heading for Marrakech (rumours of a post box in Oukaimeden were unfounded), a number of trekkers sat outside the French Alpine Club hut sampling some Moroccan beer. William Ashley's attempts to keep up in the Year 6 beer race failed miserably and he spent the evening stretched out on his Karrimat while most of us enjoyed our dinner, and the aforementioned members of Year 6 tried to keep out of the way of LAW and SJD.

**6th July**  
**A HOT AND CHILLI DAY IN THE OURIKA VALLEY**  
*by Martin Beastall*

Muscles stiff from the previous day's exertions were coaxed back into action for the walk over to the cook tent for porridge, followed by a celebration: it was Carl Mitchell's 16th birthday. We gave him a card signed by all of us, shared a couple of bars of Kendal Mint Cake, sang a not very tuneful verse of 'Happy Birthday' and then presented him with his present: a ride on a rather frisky donkey which had been grazing near camp and trying its luck with our mules the previous afternoon.

It was debatable which one of them was the more reluctant, but with Mohammed holding the donkey still with its head in an arm lock and much encouragement from the crowd, Carl managed at the sixth attempt to get on. To the cheers and applause from the onlookers the donkey trotted off ..... directly towards the lake! Fortunately perhaps, the donkey didn't reach the lake, but came to an abrupt halt which sent Carl tumbling onto the grass.

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Carl picked himself up, shouldered his rucksack and we set off on the 470-metre ascent to Tizi Attar, clearly visible on the skyline. It wasn't long before we reached the col which has dramatic cliffs falling away on its far side. It was amazing that there was any way down at all, but there was even a mule track zig-zagging down the steep broken face.

Our tranquil rest was broken by the mules which arrived shortly after us and we watched in part amusement and part fear as one of the mules, clearly not liking the prospect of the route down the cliffs, attempted to shake off its burden. However, a slap from the muleteer, a tightening of its girth and the ropes holding its load in place and they were off down the hairpins.

Apart from two who were feeling a bit below par and opted to be 'keepers of the bags', we all made the short hop up to Jbel Attar. The view was superb, the lush grass of the Oukaimeden valley

contrasting with the bare red-brown rock of the higher peaks. Photos were de rigueur as usual, especially when we found that we weren't the only visitors to the summit that morning. A goat-herd in his coarse brown robes was happy to have his photo taken with us. SJD told us that he was in fact almost breaking the law by allowing his goats to graze so close to the slopes of the Oukaimeden valley.

It was then time for the much anticipated scorpion hunt led by the fearless SJD. We turned over rocks until we found two of these shy creatures and then spent considerable time trying to get good close-up photos of them.

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We bounded back down to the col, collected rucksacks, and then more gingerly zig-zagged down the tight hairpins and out onto the stony valley floor. We had a leg-stop just before the village of Agounss and as usual children came to meet us, wide-eyed and open-palmed as they shuffled tentatively towards us. Growing courage deserted them when LAW took out his telephoto lens, but after a few kindly words from Mike they returned and were bold enough to take a look through his viewfinder.

We walked on a little further where we found another of Brahim's super salad lunches was laid out for us under the shade of a walnut grove. We were also treated to an impromptu concert of Berber songs by the muleteers (complete with washing-up bowl drums), and I don't think that all the mules together could have stopped APD getting up and joining them!

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The afternoon walk down the Ourika valley was long and hot, but well worth it. We passed through a succession of fascinating villages clinging to the sides of the valley, through their terraced fields and walnut groves to reach our campsite where the Tinzer river discharges into the main Ourika valley. We waded across the Tinzer to a shady spot perfectly suited to sleeping out under the stars.

There was universal relief when everyone plunged into the cool river, and universal mirth from the village children who giggled on the far bank as we washed our bodies and hair. Dinner was rather a disaster, with a serving of chilli sauce which took the roof of the mouth off. Even the most laddish of the lads found it much too hot, but it wasn't Brahim's fault, the blame lay with Batchelors! The discarded remains drifted off down the river and we drifted off to sleep under tranquil skies and to the gentle sounds of leaves rustling in the trees above and the occasional snorts from the mules tethered nearby.



We awoke before 6.00 to the glow of pre-dawn and the sound of rattling chains. What was that noise? It was the muleteers removing the chains which had hobbled the mules to trees overnight to prevent them escaping, or even worse, trampling on sleeping trekkers. The day's route was to follow the Tinzer river upstream through the Kassaria gorge, a route which was too narrow in places for heavily laden pack-mules to pass, so they were to take a much longer route than us (about twice as far and with much more ascent).

This meant that an early start was imperative so we had decided to bivouac the previous night so that we didn't have tents to take down and pack. In spite of the early start the muleteers were in very jovial high spirits and 'Matches' again came up with one of his favourite (and very few) English phrases: "Is good?". We had bivvied under trees but we could see that the sky was clear as usual and it was going to be another scorcher. Though we hadn't used the tents, some of them were being rolled up by the muleteers who had used them as super-de-luxe sleeping mats for extra comfort.

Before breakfast we packed our sleeping bags and any other items we wouldn't need during the day into the kit-bags ready for loading on the mules. This involved some worrying moments for those who had done some washing the previous evening, when they discovered that their clothes were no longer on the line where they had left them because a slight wind had blown them off. However, the clothes were soon recovered and we tucked into our breakfast of Alpen, tea, and jam on fresh Berber bread baked over a wood fire the previous evening.

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The mules loaded, they waded the river and set off in the opposite direction to the one we would take. Would we ever see them again? Or would they head down to Marrakech, sell all the tents and valuable down sleeping bags and live on the proceeds? Time would tell.

Suddenly Mohammed had gone. He was spied crossing the river by means of boulders and we hastily followed him and began the walk up the gorge. In the lower parts of the gorge the path follows the banks of the river, undulating (sometimes steeply) over rocky bluffs, and switching between one bank and the other, which meant that we had to cross the river many times. Although the climbing was hard work in places, it was mostly under the shade of trees which kept us quite cool, and some of us were to get even cooler later. At the river crossings Mohammed usually found an easy route and led us safely across, but at one particular crossing APD got a thorough soaking, as did quite a few

others. My nasty experience came several crossings later when I followed Mike (who was crossing at a different point from Mohammed) and I slipped and became probably the wettest of anyone. But we were all very jovial about it and because of the heat we didn't let it worry us.

All the way up the gorge huge bundles of grass were seen coming down the path on a collision course towards us. The bundles, about two metres in diameter appeared to have no means of locomotion but for a pair of feet in plastic shoes sticking out from underneath. Moving out of their way, we were greeted by Berber women of all ages from about seven to seventy seven years old stooping under the heavy loads they were carrying the several miles from the upland fields to their villages in the valley.

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After about five hours we came to the point where the steep valley became a 'proper' gorge, with vertical walls falling directly to the river, and there was no choice but to wade. GES had come prepared, and put on his flip flops. Some people put on trainers, others decided that their boots were so wet that it would make no difference anyway, and Nick Gartside put on his Yeti gaiters. As we waded up the river we were surprised at how strong the current was, at times it was almost enough to sweep one off one's feet, so we tried to keep to the shallower areas where there were banks of gravel below the surface. We all got wet legs, including Nick, whose gaiters were fine until water poured in over the top of them where the river was mid-thigh deep.

We emerged from the gorge and from the river onto a grassy bank where we dried our feet and put boots back on (or emptied our boots and wrung our socks out). We had been on the go for six hours and were keenly looking forward to lunch at this idyllic spot. But no! Mike said it would be two more legs until we got to the lunch stop. With rumblings of hunger from empty stomachs and rumblings of discontent from their owners we set off again, but after a further ten minutes walking Mike's little jest became apparent when we arrived at the place where we were to camp for the night.

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Lunch was gathered together from various rucksacks, eagerly and rapidly disposed of, then most people settled down for a siesta under a liberal coating of sun-cream. On the hillside above the valley where we had lunch was the summer village of Taloutoult, where villagers from the main valleys spend the summer months tending their herds of cattle and sheep, and as soon as we arrived the village children came down to squat or sit and watch us, and they remained there all afternoon. It wasn't as if there was much to entertain them, because we had a lazy afternoon, the highlight of which was throwing a frisbee around. This fascinated the children and when



they were invited to join in they were initially very tentative, especially the girls, but soon got the hang of it, and one boy about 4 years old was soon returning it with great venom. Unfortunately, Phil Crosbie's attempts to decapitate a cow so we could have steak for dinner failed!

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By six o'clock it was cold and getting dark, and the mules still hadn't arrived. Perhaps they **had** gone off to Marrakech after all! Those who had long trousers with them put them on, and the two who had 'foolishly' carried their sleeping bags up the gorge got inside them. We waited and we watched. When the mules were at last spied coming over the col we all cheered, and as they trotted down into camp the muleteers were clearly as relieved as we were that they had at last arrived. As they had had such a long day, two from each tent group put up their tent while the other two helped prepare dinner by peeling the vegetables. This was quite a novel experience for some, who were removing more vegetable with the peel than they were leaving behind until shown the correct technique - what an educational experience Trek is!

By lantern light Brahim then cooked dinner which included a main course of 'mystery stew', made with packets of dehydrated food which had lost their labels. While we waited Mike decided that the tinder dry bushes would burn very well and provide us with some heat, so he lit one and we stood around warming ourselves. At 8.30 we devoured our dinner with the same relish as we had consumed lunch, and not much later we went to bed.

**8th July**  
**4000 METRES OR BUST**  
**by William Ashley**

The intrepid mountaineers who had spurned the day's easier option of walking along the valley had the most gruelling day of Trek ahead of them. This daring band were to make an attempt on the north face of Trek's first ever 4000 metre peak, Iferouane (confirmed by the 1:50000 map as 4001 m). Members of the Valley Baggers or Valley Activities Club (not to be confused with MGS's prestigious Mountain Activities Club) had consulted the wrong map and saw it as a mere 3996 m (as shown incorrectly on the 1:100000 map) which they could do without. Only a select band of the most experienced and toughest trekkers were to make the summit attempt, which doesn't explain why I was going up it!

We first walked up through what was probably the most unfriendly village we came across, judging by the previous night's arguments between the village elders and the muleteers over grazing rights and the number of vicious dogs snapping at our heels as passed through.

Once through this obstacle course Mohammed set a cracking pace up the mountain. We stopped for our first break as we reached a subsidiary ridge from where we could see the main summit ridge above and down to our previous night's campsite. To the east we could also see the route we had taken the previous day, a very impressive sight as the gorge looked impassable from above.

Even at this lower height the lack of oxygen was becoming apparent, and as we climbed, and climbed, and climbed, the oxygen became less, and less and less. One member of the party, namely myself, was finding it particularly difficult and needed lots of encouragement (and a regular supply of boiled sweets) to keep him plodding uphill. Another factor in the struggle was the weight of my rucksack, which contained, in addition to the essential items, various extras including my heavy camera and the largest and heaviest personal first aid kit ever seen on Trek (Record Number 4).

The climb became less daunting as we approached the summit. But, oh no, this wasn't the summit! So on we went again heading uphill with the real summit in sight. Except that it wasn't! It was just the second of what must have been about half a dozen false summits along the main ridge. By now some of us were pretty exhausted, so we stopped for an hour's lunch break on the last of the minor summits before the top (Trek Record Number 5: the biggest gain in height before lunch - 1600 metres). Lunch was the usual mountain mix of 'laughing cow' cheese, sardines and various tinned meats on bread, adequate for a mountain lunch and sufficient to keep us going, but not as good as one of Brahim's Berber lunches.

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It was then a short walk up the final scree slope (disappointingly not a north face) to the real summit (Trek Record Number 6) where we stood around the cairn to have photographs taken. The scenery was magnificent, huge mountains all around and for the first time on Trek we could see the Sahara (well, the orange dust and haze where the Sahara was supposed to be). We could also see the famous Jbel Sahro, great, flat-topped orange/red hills in the distance.

From there it was downhill all the way, and very fast. Scree-running was the order of the day, with Mohammed jumping tens of feet at a time and eager lads (and not so eager staff) following in hot pursuit. We descended into the Tinzer valley where we filled our empty water bottles at a spring that was the source of the river.

Mohammed then pulled out all the stops for the gallop down the valley to camp, with few able to match his pace, and the party became strung out. This barren upper Tinzer valley is like something out of a 'spaghetti western', and we were almost expecting to hear Leone Verdi's music from a film such as 'Once upon a time in the West'.



It was a long walk down the valley, but suddenly we rounded a bend, and there it was, Trek's highest ever camp (Trek Record Number 7, which was to last two days), set up amongst this vast barren landscape, on a tiny oasis of soft, green, grassy banks by the stream. It had been a long, hot and strenuous day (9 hours, 11 miles and 6000-foot of ascent, impressive but not a Trek Record) and we were glad that dinner was on the way as we straggled wearily into camp. In fairly quick succession the sun set, we ate dinner and then we crashed out.

**THE VALLEY ACTIVITIES CLUB**  
by James Marks

Let me first make one thing clear. We were not being lazy, nor were we 'light weights', 'faggots', 'wimps', or any of the other titles bestowed on us by members of the 'ridge club'. Everyone in our group had chosen the alternative day because of genuine illness, particularly nasty injury or other unfortunate ailment which prevented them (against their will I might add) from taking the high ridge walk. APD was proud of his elitist bunch and claimed that we could bag a valley which those going by the ridge route could not.

As I opened the tent door I noticed that the group of Berber children who had been sitting on the hillside observing us as I went to bed, were sitting on the hillside observing us this morning. As I walked past with bowl, spoon and mug, I greeted them with a "Labas", to which came the normal reply of "Monsieur un bonbon?" and "Dirham monsieur?"

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We started off just before the others at a leisurely pace set by APD. For no apparent reason, our route took us up valleys, over climbs and through Berber settlements until eventually we ended up just a little further up the valley we had started in, and we questioned the navigation skills of Brahim who was acting as our guide for the day. But for this most welcome chance to use up some of our huge energy reserves, the Valley Activities Club would have had but a three hour day.

As we walked up the Tinzer valley to our campsite, we were joined by the mules and muleteers who had taken a more direct route over an intervening ridge. On the mule trail we had followed up the Tinzer valley, and which continues over Tizi n'Ouraine to Amsouart, there was considerable traffic during the afternoon and evening. It seems to be the 'M1' for mules in this part of the Atlas.

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Bursting with energy and eager for extra activity, everyone in our group bar one (a member of staff) set about unloading the mules and erecting tents. The particular member of staff in question adopted a quite surprisingly out of character supervisory role! Meanwhile the muleteers were preparing their normal

feast of a lunch which, after such a strenuous morning's exercise, was soon polished off. The afternoon gave us the opportunity for sunbathing, washing ourselves and our clothes, and for being warned about the dangers of bouldering.

The others straggled down the valley from their 3996-metre ridge walk as the sun was setting. They looked dirty, hungry and exhausted, and some had developed quite nasty blisters. We truly did feel sorry for them!

**9th July**  
**DOWN THE M1 FOR CHOCOLATE AND A SWIM**  
by Nick Gartside

The tent began to shine! As the sun rose over the ridge into a crystal blue sky its rays struck the orange canvas which then cast a warm glow over somnolent bodies inside, indicating it was time to get up. Typically it was a beautiful morning, but untypically it was very cold, perhaps not surprising as this was Trek's highest ever campsite. We all tucked into our mundane breakfast of muesli and bread and jam, all that is except for Spencer, who, despite the noisy antics of the 'boys from Around', and numerous mules passing along the 'M1' mule trail that passed through camp, remained in a semiconscious state on his Karrimat inside the glowing tent (and he thinks he's a hard man!).

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The day's walking began with a steep but short and pleasant climb in the now warm sunshine up the M1 to Tizi n'Ouraine. We had set off from camp in ones and twos to assemble as a group on the col, and while the early birds waited for the slow packers to arrive APD once again entertained us with a jig from his tin whistle.

On the long climbs Mohammed took it slowly and steadily, but whenever the terrain allowed us to keep up with him he set a cracking pace. The day's descent to Amsouart was along the easy M1, and so, spurred on by the pack at his heels, who believed Mike's assurances that there was a shop in Amsouart that might sell chocolate, Mohammed made the 4500-foot descent almost at a jog and we completed the four miles in two legs and under two hours.

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The village has not one shop but three, a butchers, a general store and a cafe, but alas no chocolate for sale. A plentiful supply of boiled sweets was some compensation, and one bag was shared amongst a delighted group of village children. We left the village just as 'our boys' were arriving with the mules to re-stock some of their supplies, and began the steady climb towards a vast moraine beyond which it was rumoured lay a lake (who bothers looking at the map? - Mohammed seems to know his way around).



The mules overtook us during this leg and at the end of it lunch was already waiting for us under the last shady walnut tree. Apart from its shade, the walnut tree had the advantage of being next to a small cafe whose owner immediately dashed out with a large tub of cold water into which he put two dozen bottles of Coke to cool. They didn't get much chance to cool as they, and another two dozen brought out to replace them, were snapped up to accompany our Berber lunch.

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We left the shade and struck out up the bare mountainside towards the steep moraine. Relief from the effort came in the form of a spring. Mike thought the water would be OK to drink without it being sterilised, but our strict Medical Officer (SJD) considered caution the wiser course and insisted that we all added our drops of iodine tincture. Thirsts satisfied we continued up the moraine and after the fifth false summit we glimpsed the lake; a perfect turquoise colour, bounded on three sides by steep mountain slopes and on the fourth by a rocky shore. But where would we camp?

Compelled by the need to bathe and wash clothes(!) we followed Mohammed quickly down to the edge of the lake. But we couldn't possibly camp there, some other Europeans had already pitched their tents in that spot! So we continued to the far end of the lake where we could 'camp' in splendid isolation on the boulder field that passes for a shore.

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It mattered little that it was virtually impossible to pitch tents because we were going to have a bivvy anyway in preparation for a dawn start the following day. Quick-witted trekkers rolled out their Karrimats to lay claim to bivvy sites left by previous users while others searched around for a suitable area which could be cleared of rocks and sharp stones to prepare their bed.

The charge for the lake was led by APD who was first in (and first out) of the water. Perhaps the rest wouldn't have been so keen to take the plunge had SJD spotted the water snake before they got in. The long-distance swimming record for this Trek (though probably not an all-time Trek Record) was set by Steve Billington and James Marks who were dispatched to swim to the centre of the lake with two large jerry-cans to collect water un-muddied by the paddlers at the edge.

After another superb Berber-prepared and cooked meal we turned in early as usual, and fell asleep to the sounds of Grant and Spencer discussing how it was possible to tell the temperature by the positions of the stars and the number of chirps a grass-hopper emitted in one minute.

**10th July**  
**UP AND DOWN AGAIN**  
**p.p. Spencer Groves**

This beats taking tents down: wriggle out of the sleeping bag, step into the boots, roll up the sleeping bag and Karrimat, pack them in the kit-bag and take it down to the pile by the cook tent on the way to breakfast. Porridge today - that should get us up the 4400-foot climb to the col. The muleteers seem to be having some trouble with the mules that have wandered off up the mountain. Whistling, shouting and throwing stones isn't doing much good, they're going to have to go up and lead them down.

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I don't know if it's a Trek Record, but an hour and forty minutes for the first leg of the day is going some, and it was steep too once we'd left the boulderfield. But as it's still only 9 o'clock at least it's still cool, and we've done a significant amount of the climb (over 2000 feet according to SJD's altimeter).

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Dramatic is the word for it. Back the way we have come the lake seems a mile below us and over the col the peaks across the Mizane valley are .....dramatic. Doug's bringing up the rear; his blisters are giving him some trouble. If I can remember what LAW taught me last year, we must have each gained about  $er \dots mgh = 80 \times 10 \times 1352 \dots$  that's over a million joules of gravitational potential energy! Given the efficiency of muscles we must have consumed maybe about four or five times that in food energy ..... where's my Mars Bar? But wait! We're not allowed to replace this energy yet, we're going to have lunch by the stream in the valley bottom.

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The scree run down from the col was fun, 600 feet in five minutes, and another Trek Record (Number 8) tumbles: the longest interval between breakfast and lunch has now become  $6\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Mike says it's only twenty minutes down to the hut from here, but it's not such a nice spot as this, so after lunch we'll relax here for the afternoon as it will be about another eight hours before the mules get to the hut after their much longer route round. GES will probably fall asleep over his book again.

\*\*\*\*\*

The hut could do with a pool table or table football game to help pass the time. I've had two Cokes, thrown the frisbee around for a bit, spent a while helping to try to stick the sole back on Stuart Kistruck's boot with SJD's magic sticky tape, and it's still three hours before the mules are due.



In daylight and on turf you can put up a Force Ten tent in two minutes. In the gloaming, crowded together on ground comprising packed gravel we'll be lucky if we get it pitched properly before dinner, and how long it will stay up is anybody's guess. But at least camping here at 3200 m kicks the Trek Record of two days ago into touch, and unless Trek goes to the Himalayas, this one (number 9) should last a good few years.

**11th July**  
**THOUGHTS AT HIGH ALTITUDE**  
**p.p. GES**

It's cold enough down here at the hut at night, so on Toubkal it's going to be well below freezing. In *my* sleeping bag I would probably catch a chill in the shoulder and ruin my golf swing for the rest of the summer. I'll go on the morning ascent! If we don't hit any problems we should be back down by lunchtime and I can have a siesta and polish off a few more chapters of the book.

\*\*\*\*\*

Well, that's the first 300 metres of climbing done and the tents are already just orange dots by the hut. And it wasn't too bad. Mohammed set a good pace, and the morning air is still cool. Are we really going to cross that ridge on the far side of the valley in two days time? This side is steep enough; that side must surely be vertical. Better fill up the water bottle here, there's still 700 metres to climb and it looks pretty barren up there.

\*\*\*\*\*

Not more scree! Step up two feet, slip back one foot and collect a pile of stones in the boots. At least Mohammed is picking a way up which avoids most of the small, loose scree, but even some of the larger rocks move when you stand on them. One more pull though, and we should be out of this combe and onto the ridge where the going should be easier.

\*\*\*\*\*

It wasn't that bad really, and in fact we did rather well, knocking an hour off the guide book time of four hours from the hut. And what a superb spot! 13,672 feet (Trek Record Number 10), dead calm, and warm too. And what a view, but you will have to come here yourself to appreciate it. The top is surprisingly flat for such a high rock peak, plenty of room for a green if there was any grass about, though there's not much sand around for the bunkers. Mind you, it would need a fair number of shots with a sand iron to get up here from the hut, and the rutted snow would play havoc with the putting.

\*\*\*\*\*

What fools these two youngsters are! They flew from London to Marrakech and came straight up to the hut yesterday. It's no wonder they're struggling badly to get to the summit, don't they know anything about

acclimatisation? We're taking a different route down, this time avoiding all the firmer ground and choosing all the loose bits. Great fun this scree running if you can keep your balance and don't mind your ankles being scoured by a bootful of grit, but it won't be doing the KSBs much good.

\*\*\*\*\*

As predicted, down for lunch, and Brahim's done it again. What a spread! A siesta after lunch, I think, then a bit of washing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Invigorating's not the word for it! The water's coming straight from under the ice sheet and over the waterfall. A power shower's got nothing on this! I'm glad I brought the flip-flops up; the stones on the bottom are pretty sharp. At least the sun's warm, so the socks should dry off quickly.

\*\*\*\*\*

I don't know what's in this couscous, but it's surprisingly good, and filling too. I probably won't be able to manage a second bottle of Coke. Time for a couple more chapters before it gets too cold, then an early night.

**AWAY THE BIVVY BOYS**  
**by Christopher Willson**

For those who were going to bivvy on Toubkal the morning was spent in preparation. Balaclavas, mittens, thermal tops, fleeces, waterproofs and numerous woolly jumpers were packed into bulging (though not Trek Record breaking) rucksacks, and sterilised bottles of water and molten chocolate bars were crammed into side pockets.

It had been decided not to take stoves to the summit so we had our main meal at lunchtime. We loaded our plates with couscous and vegetables, and soon everyone was replete and not a scrap remained uneaten. While we lay back to let digestion work its wonders the morning ascent party galloped back into camp for their Berber salad.

We walked up behind the hut and ascended rocky outcrops and steep scree slopes until we reached a patch of snow where we had our first leg-stop. Here I was able to re-solidify and eat one of my few remaining Mars bars before further toil up scree to the col below Toubkal.

\*\*\*\*\*

The final ascent along the ridge was easy enough and we reached the metal pyramid cairn just as the sun was beginning to drop below the horizon, sending the distant Atlas peaks into a pink orange mist which gradually faded as the sun went down.

With the temperature plummeting we sat under the summit pyramid and shared our measly rations of sardines, 'laughing cow' cheese and unleavened bread. But no matter how cold it got it



would be worth it, bivviing at this height was one Trek Record (Number 11) that wouldn't be beaten for a while! We built some low shelters from the rocks on the summit and a quarter of an hour later, with nine layers between me and the cold Moroccan night and my last Mars bar eaten, I fell asleep.

**12th July**  
**TWIN PEAKS**  
*by Mike Divine*

Carl Mitchell woke me up at 6 a.m. by running out of the tent and trampling on me in my sleeping bag, but when I heard him being sick outside I was grateful for his urgency. Sadly for Carl his state of health meant that he would have to remain in camp for the day. This was also true of Doug, whose blisters were still giving him trouble. (Whether his blisters were a Trek Record we are not sure, as details of past blisters are not often recorded, but they were surely in contention.)

The group who were going to make the day's ascent of Ouanoukrim consisted mostly of those who did the morning ascent of Toubkal the previous day, but six of the Toubkal bivvy-boys had enough energy left, after descending from the summit and grabbing some breakfast, to join us.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mohammed set a steady pace up towards the head of the Mizane valley at Tizi Ouagane, where we turned right to scramble up the rocky ridge to the plateau from which the twin peaks of Ouanoukrim rise to just over the 4000-metre line. The guide book aptly describes the ascent as 'non-technical, but follows a fine ridge in its lower reaches'. A trudge up shale slopes then brought us to the first top, Ras Ouanoukrim (4083 m) where we spent a few minutes before dropping down to the saddle, leaving rucksacks there and walking easily up to the main summit of Timsguida Ouanoukrim (4088 m).

This top is a dull, flat expanse of shale, but the views are fine, particularly of Toubkal where the he-men bivvy-boys had been standing just hours before. (Trek Record Number 12: having stood on two 4000-metre peaks in one morning). Shall we name these heroes?....why not? They were Nick Gartside, James Marks, Roger Naylor, William Ashley, Chris Willson and Stuart Kistruck.

\*\*\*\*\*

After collecting rucksacks we made a two speed descent to camp, slowly and carefully down the rocky ridge, then a galloping glissade down the mile of snowfields in the valley bottom followed by a jog back into camp, where we arrived at precisely 1.30 for lunch. It had been a splendid outing and an ascent I wouldn't have wanted to have missed.

The rest of the day was taken at a more leisurely pace. I sat around and read, and some people went up to the waterfall behind the hut for a

wash. In the evening we re-organised our kit so that what we wouldn't need for the bivvy at Tamsoult could be taken down with the tents by mule directly to Aroumd.

**13th July**  
**NO FIRE WITHOUT SMOKE**  
*by Stuart Kistruck*

As we emerged from our tents we viewed the morning's route with considerably more trepidation than two days earlier. When on our way up to Toubkal we could clearly see the pathless gully on the opposite flank of the valley high above camp leading unmistakably up to the sentinel of the Tadat pinnacle. LAW summed it up by saying "It's incredible, it looks vertical and impossible as a walkers' route". Today we were going to have to climb it!

It certainly was steep and there was no gently zig-zagging mule trail to help us. It was also our first bit of proper trekking. We had turned our backs on the Berber lunches and left Brahim and the remaining muleteers to return to Aroumd with our tents and other supplies. In one sense it was proper trekking, we were carrying all we would need for the night at Tamsoult, but we did cheat by leaving behind the tents and the stoves and carrying only lunch and packets of easy-cook fried rice for our evening meal.

\*\*\*\*\*

The weather was characteristically warm and sunny and even after nine day's acclimatisation it was hot and thirsty work as we followed Mohammed up what was the most technically demanding section of our whole route. Scree gave way to a gully, narrowing in places between crags, with occasional rock steps and patches of snow. Mohammed chose the ideal route and set a steady pace which kept us all close together. It was almost as if he was leading up the royal family, the way he kept stopping to remove any loose stones and carefully kicking steps in the snow patches.

Towards the top the floor of the gully was a steep bank of packed earth with a covering of small scree and this made secure progress very tricky. The only way to make progress upwards was to traverse quickly across the bank, trying to dislodge as few stones as possible, and then use hand-holds in the rock on the other side as a kind of bannister to pull ourselves up. Even with the utmost care, one anonymous trekker managed to dislodge a rather large stone which rolled down the hill and seemed destined to take GES with it. With a quick-wittedness honed by the study of Stuart History and a physical agility perfected by many a trip to the post office with parcels of marked scripts, he stepped nimbly aside, and survived to continue making progress through 'The Impact of the Jacobite Uprising on Pitch and Putt Courses in Shropshire in 1746'.



Whenever we had had the chance to look over our shoulders on the way up, the view down to the hut and across the valley had been increasingly impressive, and now from the col there was a fantastic view of Toubkal with our whole route up it clearly visible. Arrival at the col also enabled an argument between SJD and Roger Naylor about the height of the Tadat pinnacle to be resolved. From afar SJD had estimated the height to be 50 metres, and he stuck by this estimate, whilst Roger had to continually revise his estimate upwards as we approached the looming tower. (The guide book gives the height as 30 metres.)

After oranges at the top we plunged down the other side of the col then down a couloir filled with a bed of steep, shifting scree and boulders where dislodged pebbles rattled down below us like gunfire. The exit from the couloir was via a most exhilarating 200-metre scree run which led us down to the flat, grassy valley floor from where we then headed down to the Tazaghart hut for lunch and hopefully some Cokes. Alas, the hut was closed and locked so we had to make do with iodine water and eat our lunch on the rocks outside with a spectacular view of a waterfall.

\*\*\*\*\*

We were now down to mule track level and we galloped down the broad, sweeping hairpins, and past an even higher waterfall to reach a hamlet of herdsmen's huts and fences made of gnarled stumpy branches by the side of a meadow of soft, lush-green grass that was to be our bed for the night. There was no rest for the weary, though. We were chased off to find almost non-existent firewood to make the fires on which we would cook tea.

Even after some groups had brewed their second pot of tea and were cooking dinner, tent group 1 (who had the misfortune to have drawn SJD as dinner guest) were still struggling in clouds of smoke but little heat to raise the temperature of their first billy-full of stream water (not that **we** were doing much better, our first billy-full of hot water fell over into the fire!)

\*\*\*\*\*

As night rolled up so did the thunder clouds and it began to rain. It was only a few drops, but it was enough to send people scurrying for their bivvy bags or the herdsmen's huts. The thunder clouds passed, darkness fell, and now that Tent 1 had at last got their fire going we were all 'cordially invited' to a sing-song and story-telling round their bonfire.

**14th July**  
**RETURN TO 'CIVILISATION'**  
**by Stephen Billington**

We emerged from the depths of our sleeping bags into the clear fresh air for a breakfast of, no surprises here, muesli and bread and jam, but this time with no tea as it was too much bother getting a wood fire going and we were keen to get back to civilisation at Aroumd. It was to be another record breaking day (Trek Record Number 13): eleven days continuous walking without an official rest day.

It was a steady uphill climb along the mule trail to Tizi Mzik and we were glad of the shade of trees at the end of the first leg as the sun was fierce and there wasn't a breath of wind. Once over the final watershed it was a dusty gallop down to Aroumd, interrupted only by a stop at a cafe on the outskirts of the village to replace lost body fluids with Coke. Back at this lower altitude it was sweltering, and after the final stagger up the hill to the house, bodies collapsed in whatever shade could be found with little energy left but for swatting flies.

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Revived by a shower and our final Berber lunch, served in the relative cool of the upper dining room, some had the enthusiasm for a shopping trip down to Imlil. Other notable events of the afternoon were the re-emergence of a recognisable Bill Manning from under 10-day's stubble growth and the visit to the house of local Berbers selling rocks, minerals and jewellery. Lahcen also had a stock of rugs and blankets for sale so those of us who didn't go down to Imlil had the chance to buy presents. The best bargain of the afternoon was obtained by Christopher Willson who spent almost an hour haggling over the price of a rock crystal until its price came down to what he was prepared to pay.

It was also time to settle the drinks bills. Trek Record setter in this game was Roger Naylor whose total consumption over the eleven days of three beers, thirty-seven Cokes and Fantas, and two bottles of mineral water amounted to more than a week's wages for a muleteer.

The sun set, the temperature dropped a few degrees and we sat out on the patio by lantern light to enjoy our Berber feast of fresh vegetable soup, vegetable tajine and plates of roast goat, followed by melon. Tables were then cleared and we retired to sit round the edge of the dormitory to be entertained by the singing, drumming and dancing of girls from the village. We also made our contribution to the festivities. APD led us admirably in some English folk songs, though whether we were more tuneful than the wailing Berber songs is debatable. SJD and Spencer led the MGS formation dance team, with Spencer the most adept at imitating the Berber hip-wiggle, while LAW sat on the windowsill using up the last of the video camera batteries.



This is a scan of the pen-and-ink sketch map provided for the boys before departure. I drew the original on an A3 sheet and photo-reduced it. Digital map drawing technology wasn't available in 1992.





## **2018 NOTE**

I did the research for the text on this page and the summary tables on the following pages for the original 1986 Vanoise Trek Log, and have updated them each year since.

As part of the Trekking Centenary celebrations in 2004 a printed Centenary Brochure was produced which gives a comprehensive account of the first 100 year history of Trekking at MGS. It has a section listing all points above 3000 m that Trek has reached between 1974 and 2004. There is also a section on the ascent of summits from the earliest days as recorded in Ulula accounts. In 2015 a digital version of the Trekking Centenary Brochure was produced in order to make it more widely available.

## **TREKKING AT MGS**

MGS has a tradition of trekking which stretches back to the 1904 route marches from Alderley and Grasmere Camps and, with the exception of breaks during the wars, there has been at least one Trek almost every year since. From the earliest days trekking was distinguished from camping, a tradition established at the same time, by the fact that trekking involved carrying camping equipment from one site to the next.

The first Foreign Trek was to Germany in 1910 under the leadership of High Master J. L. Paton. From that year until 1939 the venue of Treks switched between home and abroad, though always within western Europe. There have from time to time been other expeditions to more remote areas. Ray Davies led climbing expeditions to Iceland in 1968 and 1972 and to Norway in each of the other five years from 1967 to 1973. Geographers did fieldwork in Yugoslavia in 1976 and Iran in 1968 and 1970, and there must have been other adventurous expeditions over the years.

Foreign Trek became an annual event in 1947, and an annual Scottish Trek was added by Ian Bailey in 1956. Since 1947 Foreign Trek had always been to the Alps until the first Pyrenean Trek in 1978. The Pyrenees were visited again in 1982 and 1987, and are now firmly established on Trek's list of venues. In 1984 there were two smaller expeditions each attempting something Trek had not done before. A party of 23 trekked for 11 days across the volcanic wastes of south-central Iceland, and a party of 13 explored the 'via ferrata' systems of the Brenta Dolomites. 1991 was again a year of two smaller expeditions, with a group of 15 'hutting' and peak-bagging in the Vanoise, and another group of 14 walking and climbing in Norway.

With the advent of modern lightweight camping equipment and dehydrated foods, the routes of traditional back-packing treks have moved higher into the mountains, and it is now typical to spend at least half the nights camping in the wilds at around 2000 - 2500 metres (7000 - 8000 feet).

## **AIMS OF TREK**

Foreign Trek differs from many expeditions in that it doesn't rely on scientific fieldwork as a justification for its expeditions (regular Biology and Geography field trips cater for this need). The aim is simply to walk through, and live in, wild, mountainous and sometimes remote areas for the 'pleasure' of doing just that. The nature of trekking and the demands made on expedition members, both physical and in terms of such things as good organisation, teamwork and self-reliance, make it an educational experience in the broadest sense.

## **EXPEDITION REPORTS**

With the exception of articles in the school magazine ULULA, there seem to be no written records of the Treks before 1974, when Chris Little instituted 'Trek Log' in which successive leaders have recorded details of the expeditions they organised.

From 1983 each year's log has been produced as a separate expedition report, but still with the original dual aims of being a practical help to future leaders taking Trek to the same area, and as an historical record more detailed than Ulula. In these reports the itinerary has been essentially a brief, factual account, concentrating mainly on the route taken, times and conditions. However this year, as the visit to Marrakech and observing the lifestyle in the Berber villages were as much a part of the experience as the mountains, the report is a rather fuller account of life on Trek.



## RECENT FOREIGN TREKS 1974-1992

This list gives outline details of recent Foreign Treks from the start of Trek Log in 1974 to date.  
For the full list of Treks from 1904 see the Trekking Centenary Brochure.

| YEAR | COUNTRY                     | AREA                         | LEADER                | STAFF                                                    | TREKKERS    | COST |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|
| 1992 | Morocco                     | High Atlas                   | Witton                | Dobson, Duffy, Seel                                      | 20          | £510 |
| 1991 | France                      | Vanoise                      | Witton                | Dobson, Seel                                             | 12          | £290 |
|      | Norway                      | Lyngen/<br>Romsdal           | McDonald              | Hesketh, Milne, Burin                                    | 12          | £570 |
| 1990 | Austria                     | Ost Tirol                    | Witton                | Dobson, Hand, Milne, (Witton)                            | 26          | £290 |
| 1989 | Italy                       | Dolomites                    | Witton                | Dobson, Duffy, Thorpe, Milne, (Witton)                   | 36          | £265 |
| 1988 | France/Italy<br>Switzerland | Tour du<br>Mont Blanc        | Witton                | Dobson, Hesketh, Staufenberg, (Staufenberg)              | 27          | £250 |
| 1987 | France/Spain                | Pyrenees                     | Witton                | Stubbs, Dobson, Duffy, Hand                              | 38          | £220 |
| 1986 | France                      | Vanoise                      | Witton                | Lerversha, Stubbs, Dobson, Souster, Duffy, Hesketh       | 35          | £200 |
| 1985 | Austria                     | Zillertal                    | Witton                | Lerversha, Willson, Dobson, Souster, Adams               | 37          | £185 |
| 1984 | Iceland                     |                              | Witton/ Willson       | Souster, Adams, Green, Orrell                            | 17          | £250 |
|      | Italy                       | Dolomites/ Ortler            | Lerversha             | Stubbs, Bridges                                          | 10          | £190 |
| 1983 | France/<br>Switzerland      | Mont Blanc -<br>Grand Combin | Witton                | Lerversha, Stubbs, Dobson, Souster,<br>Brierley, Kennedy | 38          | £180 |
| 1982 | France                      | Pyrenees                     | Witton                | Lerversha, Stubbs, Dobson, Souster, Willson              | 37          | £170 |
| 1981 | Austria                     | Ost Tirol                    | Lerversha             | Stubbs, Witton, Dobson, Souster                          | 38          | £150 |
| 1980 | Italy                       | Dolomites                    | Lerversha/<br>(Little | Witton<br>Hammet - Aylsbury GS)                          | 16<br>(+15) | £150 |
| 1979 | Switzerland                 | Bernese<br>Oberland          | Little                | Lerversha, Gomersall                                     | 19          | £150 |
| 1978 | France/Spain                | Pyrenees                     | Walker                | Little, Peacock, Stubbs                                  | 20          | £125 |
| 1977 | Austria                     | Tirol                        | Little                | Peacock, Buckley, Walker, Hancock                        | 21          | £120 |
| 1976 | Italy                       | Marmolada                    | Little                | Stubbs, Buckley, Walker                                  | 25          | £100 |
| 1975 | Switzerland/<br>Italy       | Monte Rosa                   | Peacock               | Stubbs, Geoghegan, Buckley, Little                       | 30          | £79  |
| 1974 | France/Italy<br>Switzerland | Mont Blanc -<br>Matterhorn   | Wylde                 | Stubbs, Geoghegan, Buckley<br>Poole, Bowyer, Peacock     | 40          | £80  |

## SUMMARY WALKING STATISTICS FOR FOREIGN TREKS 1982 - 1992

| Year                                                                | Area                         | Full<br>Walking<br>Days | Total distance<br>walked |       | Total height<br>Climbed |        | Daily averages for full walking days |       |                  |      |                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|-----------------|
|                                                                     |                              |                         | km                       | Miles | Metres                  | Feet   | Distance<br>km                       | Miles | Ascent<br>Metres | Feet | Walking<br>Time |
| 1992                                                                | Morocco                      | 11                      | 130                      | 81    | 10,850                  | 35,600 | 12                                   | 7.2   | 970              | 3180 | 4h-00           |
| 1991                                                                | Vanoise                      | 11                      | 178                      | 111   | 11,080                  | 36,400 | 16                                   | 9.7   | 1010             | 3300 | 4h-40           |
| 1990                                                                | Ost Tirol                    | 13                      | 160                      | 100   | 10,800                  | 35,400 | 12                                   | 7.7   | 830              | 2730 | 4h-30           |
| 1989                                                                | Dolomites                    | 13                      | 156                      | 98    | 10,560                  | 34,600 | 12                                   | 7.5   | 810              | 2660 | 4h-30           |
| 1988                                                                | Tour M. Blanc                | 13                      | 175                      | 110   | 11,400                  | 37,300 | 14                                   | 8.4   | 880              | 2900 | 4h-20           |
| 1987                                                                | Pyrenees                     | 12                      | 170                      | 106   | 10,800                  | 35,600 | 14                                   | 9.0   | 900              | 2960 | 4h-45           |
| 1986                                                                | Vanoise                      | 11                      | 161                      | 100   | 11,000                  | 36,100 | 14                                   | 8.9   | 995              | 3260 | 4h-45           |
| 1985                                                                | Zillertal                    | 12                      | 149                      | 93    | 10,100                  | 33,100 | 12                                   | 7.6   | 840              | 2760 | 4h-45           |
| 1984                                                                | Iceland                      | 10                      | 182                      | 114   | -                       | -      | 18                                   | 11.5  | -                | -    | -               |
| The only extended climb was 3950 ft (1200 m) to the summit of Hekla |                              |                         |                          |       |                         |        |                                      |       |                  |      |                 |
| 1983                                                                | Mont Blanc -<br>Grand Combin | 11                      | 140                      | 87    | 11,500                  | 37,600 | 13                                   | 8.1   | 1050             | 3430 | 4h-50           |
| 1982                                                                | Pyrenees                     | 12                      | 137                      | 86    | 10,400                  | 34,100 | 11                                   | 7.1   | 870              | 2840 | 4h-45           |



## TREK HIGH POINTS BY YEAR 1974 - 1992

This is a list of the highest points reached by Foreign Trek since detailed records were started in 1974. Many other summits and high passes have been climbed but only those over 3000 metres are listed, except when a Trek didn't reach this height in which case the highest point reached that year is given.

For a list from 1974 to 2004 see the Trekking Centenary Brochure.

|      |                           | Summits                  | Other High Points |                                    |       |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| 1992 | MOROCCO                   | Toubkal                  | 4167              | Tizi n'Tadat                       | 3740  |
|      |                           | Ouanoukrim               | 4088              | Tizi n'Ouanoums                    | 3664  |
|      |                           | Iferouane                | 4000              | Tizi n'Ouraine                     | 3120  |
|      |                           | Jbel Oukaïmeden          | 3273              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Jbel Attar               | 3267              |                                    |       |
| 1991 | VANOISE                   | Pointe de la Sana        | 3436              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Grand Roc                | 3316              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Rateau d'Aussois         | 3131              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pointe Boussac           | 3090              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pointe des Fours         | 3072              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pointe du Pisset         | 3033              |                                    |       |
|      | NORWAY                    | Galdhøpiggen             | 2469              |                                    |       |
| 1990 | OST TIROL                 | Kleine Muntanitz         | 3192              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Böses Weibl              | 3121              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Wilden Kogel             | 3022              |                                    |       |
| 1989 | DOLOMITES                 | Piz Boè                  | 3152              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | La Varella               | 3055              |                                    |       |
| 1988 | TOUR DU MONT BLANC        | Tête Nord des Fours      | 2756              |                                    |       |
| 1987 | PYRENEES                  | Le Taillon               | 3144              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Petit Vignemale          | 3032              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Grande Fache             | 3005              |                                    |       |
| 1986 | VANOISE                   | Grande Sassièr           | 3747              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pointe de l'Observatoire | 3015              | Pointe de la Réchasse (West Ridge) | 3044  |
| 1985 | ZILLERTAL                 | Schwarzenstein           | 3369              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Schönbichlerhorn         | 3134              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Richter Spitz            | 3052              |                                    |       |
| 1984 | ICELAND                   | Hekla                    | 1491              |                                    |       |
|      | DOLOMITES/ORTLER          | Mont Confinale           | 3370              | Mont Cevedale (NW Glacier)         | ~3600 |
| 1983 | MONT BLANC - GRAND COMBIN | Mont Rouge du Giétro     | 3439              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Mont Avril               | 3347              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pointe d'Orny            | 3270              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Grand Tavé               | 3158              |                                    |       |
| 1982 | PYRENEES                  | Vignemale                | 3298              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pic Perdiguère           | 3222              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Le Taillon               | 3144              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Pic de Néouvielle        | 3091              |                                    |       |
| 1981 | EAST TIROL                | Kasteneck                | 2836              |                                    |       |
| 1980 | DOLOMITES                 | Tofana di Rozes          | 3224              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | La Varella               | 3055              |                                    |       |
| 1979 | BERNESE OBERLAND          | Wildstrubel              | 3244              | Les Diablerets (NE Ridge)          | 3109  |
| 1978 | PYRENEES                  | Vignemale                | 3298              | Mont Perdido (NW Ridge)            | ~3050 |
|      |                           | Le Taillon               | 3144              |                                    |       |
|      |                           | Grande Fache             | 3005              |                                    |       |
| 1977 | TIROL                     | Hohe Geige               | 3395              | Riffljoch                          | 3100  |
|      |                           | Schaufl Spitz            | 3333              | Ölgrubenjoch                       | 3095  |
| 1976 | MARMOLADA                 | Piz Boè                  | 3152              |                                    |       |
| 1975 | MONTE ROSA                | Klein Matterhorn         | 3883              | Gnifetti Hut                       | 3611  |
|      |                           | Mettelhorn               | 3406              | Britannia Hut                      | 3029  |
| 1974 | CHAMONIX - ZERMATT        |                          |                   | Col du Mont Rouge                  | 3325  |
|      |                           |                          |                   | Theodulpass                        | 3290  |
|      |                           |                          |                   | Hornli Hut                         | 3260  |
|      |                           |                          |                   | Col Collon                         | 3087  |
|      |                           |                          |                   | Col de Valcournera                 | 3066  |



| Feet   | Metres | Height | Year | SUMMIT                    |
|--------|--------|--------|------|---------------------------|
| 13,500 | 4160   | 4167   | 92   | Toubkal (13,672)          |
|        | 4150   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4140   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4130   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4120   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4110   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4100   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4090   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4080   | 4088   | 92   | Ouanoukrim                |
|        | 4070   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4060   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4050   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4040   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4030   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4020   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4010   |        |      |                           |
|        | 4000   | 4000   | 92   | Iferouane                 |
|        | 3990   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3980   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3970   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3960   |        |      |                           |
| 13,000 | 3950   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3940   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3930   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3920   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3910   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3900   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3890   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3880   | 3883   | 75   | Klein Matterhorn (12,740) |
|        | 3870   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3860   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3850   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3840   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3830   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3820   |        |      |                           |
|        | 3810   |        |      |                           |

**TREK HIGH POINTS  
1974-1992  
in order of altitude**

Morocco Pyrenees

The rest are in the Alps.  
1992 High Points in blue

| Feet   | Metres | Height | Year     | OTHER HIGH POINT         |
|--------|--------|--------|----------|--------------------------|
| 12,500 | 3800   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3790   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3780   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3770   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3760   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3750   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3740   | 3747   | 86       | Grande Sassi re          |
|        | 3730   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3720   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3710   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3700   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3690   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3680   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3670   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3660   |        |          |                          |
| 12,000 | 3650   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3640   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3630   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3620   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3610   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3600   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3590   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3580   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3570   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3560   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3550   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3540   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3530   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3520   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3510   |        |          |                          |
| 11,500 | 3500   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3490   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3480   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3470   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3460   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3450   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3440   | 3439   | 83       | Mont Rouge du Gi tro     |
|        | 3430   | 3436   | 91       | Pointe de la Sana        |
|        | 3420   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3410   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3400   | 3406   | 75       | Mettelhorn               |
|        | 3390   | 3395   | 77       | Hohe Geige               |
|        | 3380   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3370   | 3370   | 84       | Mont Confinale           |
|        | 3360   | 3369   | 85       | Schwarzenstein           |
|        | 3350   |        |          |                          |
| 11,000 | 3340   | 3347   | 83       | Mont Avril               |
|        | 3330   | 3333   | 77       | Schaufel Spitz           |
|        | 3320   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3310   | 3316   | 91       | Grand Roc                |
|        | 3300   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3290   | 3298   | 78,82    | Vignemale                |
|        | 3280   | 3273   | 92       | Jbel Oukaïmeden          |
|        | 3270   | 3270   | 83       | Pointe d'Orny            |
|        | 3260   | 3267   | 92       | Jbel Attar               |
|        | 3250   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3240   | 3244   | 79       | Wildstrubel              |
|        | 3230   | 3224   | 80       | Tofana di Rozes          |
|        | 3220   | 3222   | 82       | Pic Perdig re            |
|        | 3210   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3200   |        |          |                          |
| 10,500 | 3190   | 3192   | 90       | Kleine Muntanitz         |
|        | 3180   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3170   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3160   | 3158   | 83       | Grand Tav                |
|        | 3150   | 3152   | 76,89    | Piz Bo                   |
|        | 3140   | 3144   | 78,82,87 | Le Taillon               |
|        |        | 3134   | 85       | S n nbichlerhorn         |
|        | 3130   | 3131   | 91       | Rateau d'Aussois         |
|        | 3120   | 3121   | 90       | B ses Weib               |
|        | 3110   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3100   | 3091   | 82       | Pic de N ouvielle        |
|        | 3090   | 3090   | 91       | Pointe Boussac           |
|        | 3080   |        |          |                          |
|        | 3070   | 3072   | 91       | Pointe des Fours         |
|        | 3060   | 3055   | 80,89    | La Vareilla              |
|        | 3050   | 3052   | 85       | Richter Spitz            |
| 10,000 | 3040   | 3033   | 91       | Pointe du Pisset         |
|        | 3030   | 3032   | 87       | Petit Vignemale          |
|        | 3020   | 3022   | 90       | Wilden Kogel             |
|        | 3010   | 3015   | 86       | Pointe de l'Observatoire |
|        | 3000   | 3005   | 78,87    | Grand Fache              |
|        |        |        |          |                          |
|        |        |        |          |                          |
|        |        |        |          |                          |
|        |        |        |          |                          |
|        |        |        |          |                          |
|        |        |        |          |                          |



## ORGANISATION

### Travel and Accommodation

All travel and accommodation, apart from camping, was organised by Mike Wynn through his business, Schools Adventure Services, which operates under the umbrella of Exodus Expeditions.

### Training

All boys were given a copy of the MGS-produced booklet The Good Trek Guide which details best practice in MGS Foreign Treks, together with a copy of the excellent BMC booklet Safety on Mountains.

There is a copy of The Good Trek Guide in the Trek archive.

All boys were provided with a copy of the Provisional Itinerary, a sketch map of our proposed route and they were given an opportunity to buy the 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 maps. This was to encourage them to take an interest in the route we were walking and to be able to identify features and mountains.

There were 2 training walks. Rucksacks with full equipment (apart from sleeping bags) were carried so we could check boys' kit. All boys performed well.

#### Training Walk 1

10 boys

L A Witton, A P Dobson

Saturday 2nd May

Meet: Glossop station

Route: Glossop - Shelf Brook - Doctor's Gate - Bleaklow Head - Bramah Edge - Glossop (About 11 miles)

#### Training Walk 2

9 boys

L A Witton, G E Seel

Sunday 18th June

Minibus: School to Hayfield

Route: Hayfield - Snake Path - William Clough - Kinder Downfall - Edale Cross - Brown Knoll - Mount Famine - Hayfield (About 12 miles)

## Equipment

### Tents

5 Vango Force 10 Mark 5 (4-man) tents for the boys. Two small lightweight mountain tents for the staff.

No new tents were bought this year, just some replacement tent and pole bags.

Anticipating camping on some very rough ground, we bought some heavy duty builders' polythene sheeting to be placed under the groundsheets. This was donated to the Berbers when we left.

### Stoves/Billies

No stoves taken as the only night of self-cooking would be on wood fires, using just one large aluminium billy.

### Kit list

The standard list, updated for this year. There is a copy in the Trek archive.

### Food

All food was provided, including the 'easy-cook' rice meal for the bivouack at Tamsoult.

### Health Matters

Comprehensive advice was researched and given by Simon, which included a detailed information sheet.

There is a copy in the Trek archive.

### Insurance

Insurance was provided via Exodus Expeditions, with whom the travel and accommodation arrangements were made. There were no claims.



## FOREIGN TREK ACCOUNTS 1992

From the outset it was planned that this Trek would be subsidised from reserves.  
This turned out to be about £30 per head.

### EXPENDITURE

|                     | See<br>Note |                   | Cost/head (20) |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Exodus Expeditions  |             | £9,000.00         | £450.00        |
| Other travel        | [1]         | £432.85           | £21.64         |
| Insurance           |             | £384.00           | £19.20         |
| Equipment           | [2]         | £90.60            | £4.53          |
| Provisions          | [3]         | £110.09           | £5.50          |
| Maps                | [4]         | £89.84            | £4.49          |
| Guides              | [5]         | £48.84            | £2.44          |
| Postage, phone etc. |             | £22.73            | £1.14          |
| Photographic        | [6]         | £769.47           | £38.47         |
| Medical             | [7]         | £37.75            | £1.89          |
|                     | [8]         | £60.00            | £3.00          |
|                     |             | <u>£11,046.17</u> | <u>£552.31</u> |

For notes see the following page.

### TOTAL EXPENDITURE

**£11,046.17**

### INCOME

|         |                          |               |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Charges | 20 @ £510                | £10,200.00    |
| Other   | Deposit Account Interest | £6.44         |
|         | NSB Interest             | £107.95       |
|         | Tent hire                | £80.00        |
|         | Equipment hire           | <u>£11.00</u> |
|         |                          | £205.39       |

### TOTAL INCOME

**£10,405.39**

### LOSS FOR 1992

**-£640.78**

|                    |                           |                  |                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| BALANCE at 21/1/92 | Current Account           | £402.48          |                 |
|                    | Deposit Account           | £1,092.88        |                 |
|                    | NSB                       | <u>£1,254.18</u> |                 |
|                    |                           | £2,749.54        |                 |
|                    | Less 1992 balance in hand | <u>£920.00</u>   |                 |
|                    |                           |                  | £1,829.54       |
|                    | Loss for 1992             |                  | <u>-£640.78</u> |

### NET BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD

**£1,188.76**

|                    |                               |                  |                  |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| BALANCE at 19/1/93 | Current Account               | £127.31          |                  |
|                    | Deposit Account               | £49.32           |                  |
|                    | NSB                           | <u>£2,552.13</u> |                  |
|                    |                               |                  | £2,728.76        |
| [9]                | Less 1993 net balance in hand |                  | <u>£1,540.00</u> |

### NET BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD

**£1,188.76**



## NOTES

|                          |                                  |         |                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| <b>[1] OTHER TRAVEL</b>  | British Rail                     | £388.50 |                |
|                          | Practice walks                   | £22.35  |                |
|                          | Petrol                           | £22.00  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£432.85</b> |
| <b>[2] EQUIPMENT</b>     | Tent and pole bags               | £53.13  |                |
|                          | Groundsheet liner                | £22.00  |                |
|                          | Other spares                     | £15.47  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£90.60</b>  |
| <b>[3] PROVISIONS</b>    | Vegetarian food extras           | £28.65  |                |
|                          | Provisions on Trek               | £36.56  |                |
|                          | Meal for Mike                    | £20.00  |                |
|                          | Reunion refreshments             | £24.88  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£110.09</b> |
| <b>[4] MAPS</b>          | Morocco                          | £32.19  |                |
|                          | Picos de Europa                  | £22.85  |                |
|                          | Pyrenees                         | £34.80  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£89.84</b>  |
| <b>[5] GUIDES</b>        | Smith (Atlas)                    | £9.95   |                |
|                          | Peyron (Atlas)                   | £10.00  |                |
|                          | Castle (Queyras)                 | £5.95   |                |
|                          | Price (Dolomites)                | £9.95   |                |
|                          | Townsend (Pyrenees)              | £12.99  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£48.84</b>  |
| <b>[6] PHOTOGRAPHIC</b>  | Video camera, batteries and tape | £715.48 |                |
|                          | Slides                           | £24.99  |                |
|                          | Prints                           | £15.00  |                |
|                          | Colour photocopies               | £14.00  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£769.47</b> |
| <b>[7] MEDICAL</b>       | MASTA Health Brief               | £27.00  |                |
|                          | Sterile medical pack             | £10.75  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£37.75</b>  |
| <b>[8] MISCELLANEOUS</b> | Mike Wynne's tip                 | £50.00  |                |
|                          | Alan Keohane's tip               | £10.00  |                |
|                          |                                  |         | <b>£60.00</b>  |

**[9] 1993 DEPOSITS IN HAND:** 22 @ £70 £1,540.00

**EXCHANGE RATE** £1 = 15 Dirhams

### NOMINAL RUNNING COST

|               |                                        | ADD     | DEDUCT  |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Equipment:    | Annual allowance @ £20 per head = £400 |         |         |
|               | Less £90 spent                         | £310.00 |         |
| Video camera: |                                        |         | £715.00 |

Hence nominal running cost is £10,641 i.e. £532 per head

Allan Witton January 1993