



GLOBALADVENTUREGUIDE

Morocco - Atlas Traverse 10 Day Mountain Bike Tour

The Central High Atlas is one of the most unspoilt and beautiful of Morocco's mountain regions. It's also one of Morocco's best regions for mountain biking, with mile upon mile of uninterrupted jeep tracks and trails. On this biking adventure we take on some challenging climbs and superb descents from the verdant valley of Ait Bougmez to the striking Dades Gorge in the Moroccan south. The variety of landscape is staggering - from stark mountains and fertile valleys, to rocky gorges, to rivers and pine forests and isolated windswept plateaux.

There's also the challenge of a 100km "century ride" on the last day, as well as the sights of Marrakech and the Ouzoud Falls to be experienced and explored.

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive Marrakech

Arrive at Marrakech Airport (RAK). Once you have collected your baggage and/or bikes you will be met by one of our tour guides. They will then transport you to our hotel accommodation in the centre of Marrakech. Flights normally arrive in the evening, so, once checked-in we head out for a get-together dinner and trip briefing leaving some time to size up the bikes for those who are hiring, or for those who have brought their own, we will assist in re-assembling them.

Accommodation: 3 Star Hotel **Meals:** Dinner **No cycling**



Day 2 – Marrakech | Ouzoud Falls | Ait Bougmez

After breakfast we are met by our transfer vehicle and our Moroccan mountain guide to take us to the Ait Bougmez valley in the Central High Atlas mountains. The journey takes a total of around four hours, but we break the journey half way with a visit to Morocco's most impressive waterfall – the Cascades d'Ouzoud.

Arriving at the village of Ouzoud, set in a broad flat valley, one has little idea of what lies beyond. Passing the cluster of restaurants and souvenir shops, the ground drops

away dramatically, giving way to a verdant gorge, with three beautiful cascades of white water falling into the pools below.

Here we take a walk down to the foot of the falls and have a cup of mint tea in one of the cafés overlooking the falls before continuing on from Ouzoud we drive for a further hour and a half high into the Atlas Mountains. Here we choose an appropriate spot for a picnic lunch, before taking to our machines for a 30km (largely downhill) ride into the valley of Ait Bougmez, one of the most beautiful valleys in the High Atlas, 14km in length and about a kilometre across, it's a wide flat expanse of fruit orchards, fields of barley, and green pastures criss-crossed by streams flowing down from the surrounding M'Goun massif.



The village of Tabant is the main administrative centre which lies a couple of kilometres from our gite in the village of Imelghas, at 1860m above sea level. On arrival we may have time to climb to a hilltop "Marabout" (holy shrine) to get a panorama of our surroundings before heading back to our gite for dinner where we'll discuss our forthcoming ride.

Accommodation: Gite **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 30km

Day 3 - Ait Bougmez

After a leisurely breakfast we set off on a day's ride around the Ait Bougmez valley. It's an easy day's riding along singletrack valley trails and wider jeep tracks. Today the gradient is gentle, giving everyone time to loosen up before taking to the mountains proper. Our first port of call is the village of Tabant where we'll drop in on the Sunday market, or souq. All major villages and small towns have a market day where people from the surrounding area descend on the town to buy goods for the week ahead. Despite the tarmac road to Azilal, the valley is still very isolated and the souq performs an important function for villagers, and even nomads, from the region. Here we can enjoy a glass of mint tea and soak up the atmosphere of a traditional (and particularly friendly) Atlas mountain market.

Moving on, we continue westward through the valley along paths normally used by villagers and their mules. At times it's hard to believe we're in Morocco, as we ride past cultivated fields, orchards, and meadows of wild flowers. Every now and then we're sure to get invited into Berber family houses for tea and bread with olive oil such is the incredible hospitality of people in the Bougmez region.

After stopping for a picnic lunch we continue our ride either back through the fields or along a smooth tarmac road that takes us back to Imelghas.

Accommodation: Gite **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 28km

Day 4 - Ait Bougmez | Telmest

After breakfast we set off on a ride which over the course of the next five days will take us from the verdant valleys of the north to the rugged canyons of the Moroccan south. Heading off from our gite, we follow the Bougmez valley northwards, climbing gradually and passing through some more typical adobe villages. The jeep track follows the valley before climbing sharply out of Ait Bougmez and up to a pass at 2600 metres above sea level. It's a tough 8km climb but you'll be well rewarded with some fantastic views southward over the valley. Up at the pass the scenery changes as the greenery of the valley gives way to more stark, wild mountains punctuated with simple stone shelters (azibs) used by nomads in summer when they migrate from the burning hot south with their flocks of animals. It's also good terrain for sighting Bonelli's Eagles and Ospreys.

After a fast descent we stop for our picnic lunch in a river valley where another souq is held once a week. After a good rest we have another climb of 6km or so to tackle before some more glorious downhill to our overnight stop. This time we climb to 2700m – enough altitude to notice a shortness of breath in the lungs – but it's all worth it as we descend through some wonderful scenery along a rough trail to the village of Telmest, set in a cultivated valley which seldom sees other tourists and where we stay in a Berber family house for the night.

Accommodation: Family Accom. **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 53km



Day 5 - Telmest | La Catedral

Today we make a leisurely start, taking time to enjoy our surroundings after a tough day's riding yesterday. In spring the valley is awash with wild flowers and fields of corn and barley, and it's a beautiful sight to watch the locals out in the fields. Today's ride takes just a couple of hours with the aim of arriving at our destination for lunch.

After a short climb up a precipitous track, we descend for 15km through pine forests and along a superb winding trail. We pass some beehives en route where the local people cultivate honey in clearings in the pine forest, and then the huge limestone monolith of "La Catedral" appears. The rock is so named as it resembles the piped masonry found on the exterior of some cathedrals. Here we settle into our gite and have lunch by a river.

The afternoon is free for some optional trips. You can spend some time exploring the area on foot (there are several half day hikes in the region) or the support vehicle can

take you up to the top of another monstrous climb and you can bike back down. The choice is yours....

Accommodation: Gite **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 22km



Day 6: La Catedrale | Anergui Plateau

Today's ride is a tough one with most of the day spent climbing. The first part of the day is a 35km section, following a rough track alongside a stream that joins the main channel at the Cathedrale. It's a gradual ascent through a beautiful gorge where water flows year round. The route is lined with incredible cacti and there are plenty of opportunities to cool off in the river. After 35km we arrive at our lunch stop near the village of Anergui, a small settlement set in a wonderful location lost in the heart of the Central High Atlas.

Re-energised, we have the afternoon to tackle the toughest climb of the tour - a 12km haul up from Anergui onto a plateau perched at 2500m above sea level. That's 1000m of climbing, before a short downhill takes us to our wild campsite where we set up camp and spend the night with only a small stream and the surrounding hills for company.

Accommodation: Camping **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 51km

Day 7: Anergui | Agoudal

After a hefty camp breakfast we bike straight out of camp for a day of undulating riding. Today has several small passes in store for us, as well as some superb and varied descents through some more classic Central Atlas scenery. After a gradual warm up climb there's a rough exciting descent with some singletrack trails used by villagers and their mules. Spare a thought for our support vehicles as they struggle to find a path along the jeep track which at times is merely the bed of the river that flows down the valley. At the foot of the descent there's a river crossing and we make our way through a gorge before climbing again onto an exposed plateau dotted with farmhouses. Our lunch spot will depend on how far we advance but we'll find a suitable location that makes the most of our surroundings.

The final leg of the day's ride takes us on a winding descent to the first tarmac road we have seen since our arrival in Ait Bougmez. There's a feeling of returning to civilization in some form, but it doesn't last for long! Here we hop into our support vehicles for a transfer to Agoudal, passing through the village of Imilchil en route. Imilchil is famous for its annual brides' festival where young people parade along the streets of the village in search of a partner whilst their parents handle the negotiation procedure with the prospective partner's family. There is little else to explain the cluster of hotels in what's otherwise a one-horse town. We pass through the town and

continue along dirt roads another 25km to our overnight stop in the village of Agoudal.

Accommodation: Gite **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 42km

Day 8: Agoudal | Dades Gorge

Today is a big challenge; 100km of riding taking us from the high plateau of the Central High Atlas into what is the start of the deep south of Morocco. By the time we arrive in Agoudal we can clearly notice the change in character from previous days with the tougher and harsher south stamping its imprint on the landscape, the villages and the people – a character that continues to change as we descend to our destination, the spectacular Dades Gorge. As today's ride is a difficult challenge for any rider, we have to set off early and keep a steady pace up throughout the day. The first part of the ride is a gradual, but nevertheless taxing, climb up to the highest pass at 2500m above sea level. It's a rough track in places and the hardest part of the climb is about 5km long. After this we have a fantastic reward – a glorious sweeping 20 km descent across an immense and barren landscape, including some excellent single track. That leaves another 20km of dirt road, through villages and largely downhill, before a 35km tarmac section takes us into the Dades Gorge and our overnight stop in a comfortable maison d'hotes guesthouse.

The tarmac road is mainly downhill but there's one last sting in the tail with a very steep 1km section right at the end of the ride! Here you'll have to dig in, but the end is in sight and a cold beer waiting on arrival should help to breathe fire into those tired muscles. Remember that the support vehicle will be on hand for those in need of assistance.

Accommodation: Guesthouse **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Cycling:** 100km

Day 9: Dades Gorge | Marrakech

With our biking mission accomplished we take some time to see the fabulous Dades Gorge before taking a full day transfer back to Marrakech. If we have time on route we can visit the UNESCO site of Ait Benhaddou – an 11th century kasbah surrounded by desert and mountains. From here we take the Tichka pass over the Atlas mountains before dropping down onto the plains surrounding Marrakech.

Arriving back in Marrakech is a real highlight. Having arrived in the evening at the start of the trip we had little time to explore the Marrakech medina (old town). This is another UNESCO Heritage Site and said to be the second largest medieval complex in the world, after Cairo.

Guides are available for those who wish to be guided but we recommend seeing the city at your own pace, taking time to wander through the beguiling labyrinth of tiny alleys and passageways in the ancient medina. You might like to visit the ancient Badi and Bahia Palaces, the museum of Marrakech, or a short taxi ride will take you to the Majorelle Botanical Garden, owned by Yves Saint Laurent. There are also the famous souqs (markets) of Marrakech - ideal for devotees of ethnic fashion and decoration, but worth a look for the sights, sounds and smells of this most exotic of markets. But the real Marrakech experience is more about enjoying its unique atmosphere.

Tonight we explore the main square – the Djemaa el Fna – to witness one of the world's most animated nighttime spectacles. At night the square is transformed into a giant open air restaurant with men in white coats serving anything from sheep's head stew to snails in hot sauce. The rest of the square is dedicated to other forms of entertainment such as snake charmers, storytellers, acrobats and dancers. Later we will enjoy a farewell dinner in a restaurant before exploring what Marrakech has to offer in the way of nightlife.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast **Cycling:** No Cycling

Day 10

Transfer to airport for homeward flight. Most flights depart in the afternoon so there's time to explore the city and pick up a few last minute souvenirs. (B)

Meals: Breakfast, **No Cycling**

10 DAY TOUR PRICE:

GBP\$795.00 per person

Included in 10 day tour:

- Support vehicle
- All meals listed: (B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner)
- Accommodation: Hotels, Guesthouses, family houses and camping
- Experienced English speaking guide
- Airport transfers on days 1 and 10 only
- Mint tea and bottled drinking water

Not Included in 10 day tour:

- International Flights
- Bike rental (from GBP120)
- Single Supplement (not applicable on this tour – twin share only)
- Drinks & favourite snack bars (except bottled water provided while riding)
- Travel Insurance
- Personal expenses
- Guide and local tips
- Travel Visas (to be obtained in advance where required)

Grade:

This tour is graded 4-5 (on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being extreme)

These tours are designed for participants who have a good base fitness and experience in technical riding new highs of achievement.

Riding distances may vary from the itinerary, depending on the abilities of the group and options taken. There is plenty of riding for all levels.

Fitness Required:

A good level of fitness is required, exercising at least three to four times a week prior to the tour.

DEPARTURES

MOROR04 15-May-09 to 24-May-09

MOROR05 18-Sep-09 to 27-Sep-09

Global Adventure Guide

Tour Booking Terms & Conditions

- Global Adventure Guide (GAG) reserves the right to modify tour itineraries in situations such as adverse weather or to better suit client requirements
- GAG shall not be held responsible for any damage, expense or inconvenience caused by late arrival of public transport, schedule changes, strikes, vehicle breakdown, Acts of God, or other conditions beyond our control
- GAG acts solely as an agent in securing accommodation and where applicable, public transport, and shall not be held liable in the event of any failure by any person or company to render transportation, accommodation or other services
- GAG reserves the right to resell a tour space without notice if final payment has not been received by due date. The right is reserved to decline to accept or retain at any time any participant in any tour.
- If any cyclist is riding in such a manner that it causes damage to the rented bike that person will be held liable for all expenses incurred to repair the bike to allow reuse
- Helmets must be worn at all times while participating on our cycling tours
- By making the deposit payment you are deemed to have accepted Global Adventure Guide's Terms and Conditions
- There will be no refunds once a tour has commenced

Tour Confirmation

A deposit of 25% of the tour price is required in order for us to reserve your place on your selected tour departure. On receipt of your deposit by Global Adventure Guide a confirmation letter/invoice will be emailed to verify your travel arrangements and advise final payment details.

Booking Forms

Global Adventure Guide requires all tour participants to complete a booking form in full following confirmation of their tour space. Failure to provide full details of your travel plans may result in miscommunications of your exact travel specifications. Our booking form is available for completion online at:-

<http://www.globaladventureguide.com/www/entry/booking.php>

Tour Pricing

Our international tours are in many cases priced utilizing the local currency at origin of the tour departure. All confirmation letters will verify the currency of the tour and its value, we will also give an estimated New Zealand Dollar (NZD) value. However, any representation to New Zealand Dollars (NZD) on our confirmation letters is an estimated final price only and payment will be converted at the correct exchange rate on the date final payment is made to Global Adventure Guide.

Final Payment

The balance for all Global Adventure Guide tours must be paid no later than 60 days prior to tour departure.

Our preferred method of payment is via our secure website utilizing your credit card. This web address is:- **<https://secure.globaladventureguide.com/chargeform/>**

Tour Cancellation Policy

All tour cancellations will require notification in writing to Global Adventure Guide reservations by the person participating on the tour. It is advisable to purchase cancellation insurance on payment of your tour deposit to avoid any unforeseen circumstances.

- Cancellations received 90 days or greater prior to tour departure will result in a loss of 50% of the tour deposit per person.
- Cancellations received between 60 - 90 days prior to tour departure will result in full loss of tour deposit per person.
- Cancellations received between 30 - 60 days prior to tour departure will result in a 50% loss of the full tour price per person.
- Cancellations received less than 30 days prior to tour departure will result in 100% loss of full tour cost per person.

Global Adventure Guide will in most circumstances allow the transfer of the deposit or tour payment to another tour departure (subject to availability) provided the request is received at least 60 days prior to departure.

An administration fee of NZD\$50.00 per person will apply.

Safety Terms and Customer Declaration

Your safety is our priority. However, all adventure tourism includes inherent risks, dangers and hazards. These include road cycling, mountain biking and hiking.

While we will endeavor to ensure your trip is as safe as possible not all risks, dangers and hazards can be anticipated or avoided.

We ask you to carefully read and fully understand the 'Global Adventure Guide Safety Terms and Customer Declaration' on your tour booking form. Your signature is required to complete your reservation.

Should you have any concerns or require clarification on any of Global Adventure Guide's Tour Terms & Conditions, Safety Terms & Customer Declaration or Health Profile requirements please do not hesitate to contact us.

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