

Friends Of Southampton PICU Sahara Trek



Duration: 9 days

From flat desert floor scattered with ancient fossils, to perfect wind-blown sand-dunes, and salt-pans creating strange mirages, the trekking is diverse and demanding. A vast, unforgiving landscape, the desert is a truly beautiful place to discover, while the incredible star-strewn night skies are unforgettable.

Accompanied by Berber guides and a small caravan of camels, our remote night-camps with camp-fires and Berber singing are often a real highlight of the trip! Back in Marrakech, an evening in the souks provides a real contrast and a great way to celebrate!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Fly London to Ouarzazate

Pronounced 'Wazzazat', this busy town on the edge of the desert, famous for its film studios, lies just south of the High Atlas Mountains. We transfer the short distance to our hotel. Night hotel.

Day 2: Ouarzazate – Zagora – Erg Lihoudi

After an early breakfast, we have a detailed briefing and then leave for the five-hour drive to M'Hamid, our starting point. Our drive takes us over the low mountains of the Jebel Sarhro and down the 'Valley of a Thousand Kasbahs' into the desert. We have a brief stop in Zagora to buy a shmla (native headscarf); you might also want to enjoy a last cold drink before the heat of the desert! On arrival at our start point, we have lunch while the cameleers load up the camels. Our late afternoon trek takes us firstly across flat open plain and then into Erg Lihoudi, our first taste of small dunes. We make camp at the edge of the dunes for the night. Night camp.

Drive approx. 5 hours; trek approx. 3 hours

Day 3: Erg Lihoudi - Oued Naam

The full colour of the landscape erupts as the sun rises. Hot coffee and a good breakfast set us up for a good day's trek. We break camp, load the camels and head off across Erg Lihoudi, walking across the small dunes and around the larger ones. Amongst the dunes are small tamarisk trees that manage to flourish in this harsh environment. Continuing through the small dunes, we can see the Jebel Bani Mountains to the north and dunes to the south. After around four hours, we stop for lunch in the shade of a large tree. During the afternoon we walk out of the dunes and onto a flat rocky plateau where we make camp near Oued Naam close to a well. Night camp.

Trek approx. 6 hours

Day 4: Oued Naam – Bouguern

Leaving camp behind us, we walk across flat, open country with the camels not far behind. The surface is firm and stony; tough grass pokes through in places. We skirt to the north of some low dunes, walking on both soft sand and stony plateau, where fossilised sea creatures can be found. The hottest part of the day sees us in the shade having lunch, with time to relax and refill water bottles. In the afternoon we head across beautifully-formed low dunes to an area called Bouguern, where there are several large dunes and clumps of palm trees. The walking is tough and tiring; sand fills our boots, and our feet sink into the small dunes. After an hour we see the large dunes in the distance and head for them. Distance is hard to gauge in the desert and it takes a further two hours to reach the dunes and our campsite perched on a bluff overlooking the dunes. Night camp.

Trek approx. 7 hours

Day 5: Bouguern – Erg Chegaga

After a good breakfast we head off down a gully onto the desert floor. We spend the morning crossing hamada, or stony flat desert. We have several short climbs and cross dry and dusty plains. There is very little vegetation around but we manage to find the only tree for miles to have lunch under. When the hottest part of the day has passed, we set off across more hamada until we cross a ridge and have a spectacular view of Chegaga, the largest sand dune of the region. We camp below the dunes for the night. Night camp.

Trek approx. 7 hours

Day 6: Erg Chegaga – Lake Iriki

The day starts with the spectacular dune climb and incredible views from the top of Chegaga – a 100m height gain. To the south are rolling dunes as far as you can see; to the north, hamada and the Jebel Bani. After taking in the view, we have fun descending the dune along one of the narrow ridges. Regrouping at the bottom and meeting up with the camels, we refill our water bottles and walk through low dunes. We spend the whole day in amongst the dunes, passing the occasional nomadic encampment and small clump of palm trees. In the late afternoon we finally emerge from the dunes and head out across flat desert and acacia trees to our campsite near a well and just below the Jebel Bani. Night camp.

Trek approx. 7 hours

Day 7: Lake Iriki - Mdouar

Today is our day of mirages and flat salt pans. We firstly walk across several kilometres of hamada with dunes lying to the south. Gradually the acacia trees vanish and we are left in a spectacularly flat open salt pan. Once again, distances are impossible to gauge and the views shimmer in the heat. There is no cover for lunch so we put one of the tents up to give us shade. We are getting close to our hundredth kilometre now; the last few are completed crossing this remote and desolate place. Our last night is spent on the salt pan with its (usually) incredible sunset. Night camp.

Trek approx. 7 hours

Day 8: Mdouar - Fom Zguid - Marrakech

An early start as we load into land-rovers and drive the last bumpy section across the desert piste to the tarmac road. The exciting journey is great fun if a little bouncy! We then transfer to our bus and cross the stunning High Atlas Mountains to Marrakech, where we check into our hotel and enjoy a well-earned shower! We have time to walk through Jma El Fnay, the main square, en-route to our restaurant in the heart of the souk, where we celebrate in style! Night hotel.

Drive approx. 7 hours

Day 9: Fly Marrakech to London

An early transfer takes us to the airport, and we fly home.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Scheduled flights to London - Ouarzazate and all transport
- All accommodation (hotels and camping)
- All meals (exceptions detailed in itinerary)
- Celebration meal
- Discover Adventure leaders
- Discover Adventure doctor with a group of 15 or more participants

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Meals as detailed in itinerary
- Personal travel insurance (to cover personal injury, cancellation/curtailment, lost items etc)
- Alcoholic drinks
- Sleeping bag

GRADE | ORANGE

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **ORANGE** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 24 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.