

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](#)

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Accommodation

Whilst on the trek you will be **camping in tents with room for 2 people plus your luggage**, though sleeping out under the stars for at least one night is highly recommended! On this challenge, it's expected that everyone will share tasks together, like putting up tents each evening in camp. We use good hotels at the start and end of the trip.

We camp in two-man tents; these are usually expedition-style (ie sleeping room only). Camps are usually simple, in remote locations with great views! We have communal dining areas (usually with tables and chairs/stools) and toilet tents, and the local crew look after us very well. We stay in hotels (of a 2-3* standard or equivalent) at the start and end of the trip; standards may vary between different hotels, but they are generally clean and comfortable with good facilities.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!



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 25 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.