Sahara Challenge
3rd - 10th November 2018

Information Pack

Trek through the Sahara desert and help a community project in Marrakech with hands-on tasks such as refurbishment and decorating.
Morocco
Situated in North West coast of Africa, the Kingdom of Morocco is a country with a population of over 33 million people. The stunning Atlas Mountains and Sahara Desert is an adventure lover’s paradise and Marrakech, a main hub of the country, is a wild mixture of spicy aromas, peaceful mosques, diverse entertainers and a cacophony of merchants in the bustling medina. Although the country is only separated from Europe by the straits of Gibraltar, Morocco feels like a whole world away in terms of culture, climate and scenery.

Berbers
The Berbers (or Amazighen – ‘free people’) are an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa whose culture can be traced back over 4,000 years. Today most Berber people live in Algeria and Morocco although there are also Berber communities in Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Before the advent of Islam most Berbers were Christians, now the majority are Sunni Muslim. Traditionally, Berber men take care of livestock and Berber women take care of the home and make handicrafts for use around the home and to sell. The lifestyle is generally nomadic or semi-nomadic and there are large Berber communities in the rural parts of the country.

Sahara
The third largest desert on the planet (after Antarctica and the Arctic respectively), the Sahara is a vast desert covering over 3,600,000 square miles. The Sahara is the world’s hottest desert with record temperatures exceeding 50°C. Despite its inhospitable conditions, the Sahara has many species of flora such as acacia, palms and grass which have adapted to the arid conditions. There are also a number of animals such as monitor lizards and many species of bird.

Highlights of the Experience...
• Discover a remote, exotic and beautiful landscape
• Taste phenomenal cuisine and gain insight into local culture
• Get hands on supporting a local community in Marrakech
• Make a difference to your community by raising money for St Oswald’s Hospice to help provide specialist palliative care for adults, young people and children in the North East.

If you have any questions before embarking on the adventure of a lifetime please contact Helen Alderson on 0191 285 0063 (extension 2113) or HelenAlderson@stoswaldsuk.org.
About St Oswald’s...

What difference can your sponsorship money make?
St Oswald’s makes no charge for its services ensuring hospice care is available to everyone. Our annual running costs exceed £11 million. From this we must raise £8 million through voluntary giving. We rely on the support, effort and generosity of the local community in order to be able to do this. **Your sponsorship will help to make a real difference to the lives of others.**

Who does St Oswald’s help?

**...Local adults**
We care for adults from across the North East with life limiting conditions such as (but not limited to) Cancer, Motor Neurone Disease and Multiple Sclerosis. St Oswald’s follows a holistic approach that aims to address not just physical symptoms, but also spiritual and emotional needs too. Our wide range of services include: An Inpatient Unit, lymphoedema Service, Day Hospice, Outpatients Unit, Outpatient Clinics, Day Treatment, Complementary Therapies, Outreach and Support Groups.

What our patients tell us:
“*Our special thanks go to all the doctors, nurses, support staff and volunteers who at all times helped and cared for my wife and us her family. In this day and age it was an oasis of love and warmth.*”

“*We were welcomed like old friends and could not have received better care, we were listened to and given time to assess each new suggestion for treatment and we could ask questions at any time.*”

“*Being in the St Oswald’s ‘family’ is like having a big hug every day, everyone, and we mean EVERYONE, is so supportive and caring and we are so glad that we have found each and every one of you.*”

**...Local children and young adults**
- We provide specialist short breaks to children and young people with progressive, life-shortening conditions.
- Children from birth to 25 can stay on our unit which offers families a relaxed home-from-home environment.
- Specialist, medically-supported care is provided to children and young people, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What our families say:
“*Words cannot express how important a role you all play in families’ lives when they need you the most. You are a tremendous support and we have been privileged to experience your unique skills when we needed them. Keep up the good work.*”

“*Having respite at St Oswald’s for a couple of nights a month helped to give me a break. While I was doing all the medical care for my son, I couldn’t be a mum. Being at St Oswald’s gave me time to step back and just enjoy playing with him and having fun.*”

“*You are amazing; I simply couldn’t function if I didn’t have your help. My daughter loves coming here.*”
Trip Overview
The trek in the Moroccan Sahara gives you an insight into this vast and diverse landscape as well as the Berber way of life. You will spend two full days and two half days trekking across ancient dried up river beds, sand dunes and vast sun-baked plains. Camping each night gives you a chance to experience the stunning stars in the night sky (weather permitting) and the traditional Berber cuisine cooked by the team is a delight.

After your trek you will start the second part of your challenge, spending two days assisting a community project in Marrakech, such as an organisation which supports street children, a medical day clinic or a home for the elderly. Here you will have the opportunity to get hands on with refurbishment, redecorating and gardening tasks which make an instant visible positive impact for the local community.

Who accompanies us? 
You will be accompanied by professional English-speaking Berber guides who have an excellent knowledge of culture and hiking in the region. The guides are first aid trained and will support you throughout your journey. You will also be accompanied by a team of support staff including cooks and camel handlers and a Different Travel Company UK tour manager.

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

What is the climate like?
Temperatures tend to range from up to 40°C during the day down to around 0°C at night however you must be prepared for variations to this which are out of our control. Weather during the trek will be dry but there may be strong winds. Rain, although very rare, is not impossible. Please note: the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate for this time of year but climate change can impact the seasons so you may experience uncharacteristic conditions during the trip which are out of our control. Should unexpected climate conditions occur the guides will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and ultimately safety of the group as a whole.

How do we get to the desert?
To get to and from the desert requires long drives (approx. 9 hours, including breaks, each way) along winding mountain roads which offer stunning views of the snow-capped peaks and lush valleys. If you suffer from motion sickness you are advised to bring your usual anti-nausea medication with you. Regular stops are taken.
What's the daily routine like?
Each day's trek will vary in duration but on average you will trek for 5-8 hours per day, covering approximately 15-20km, with a long break at lunchtime when you will spend a few hours relaxing through the heat of the day. Bring a book, music or playing cards to pass the time or just enjoy relaxing in the desert environment.

Where will we sleep?
During the trek you will sleep in tents (two to a tent) which are provided, or if the weather is good you can sleep outside under the stars (recommended!). Foam sleeping mats are provided but you will need to bring a sleeping bag.

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

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

Who can take part?
You must be 18+ to participate on this trek unaccompanied. It may be possible to participate if you are 16 or 17 years old but you will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. There is no upper age limit. The ideal candidate would be fit, healthy and determined, open to adventure and adaptable to unexpected changes.

How tough is it?
The trek is rated moderately challenging for someone of a good fitness level. The terrain is generally flat with sand dunes representing the biggest variation in gradient; however the temperatures will pose a specific challenge with temperatures historically reaching 40°C. You are advised to be of a good fitness level before departure to ensure fast recovery from each day's exertions. An ideal candidate would be someone who enjoys being out of their comfort zone and trying something new.

How should I train?
If you do not already regularly exercise it is crucial that you start training before departure to ensure your best chance of enjoyment on the trip. This could include speed walking, hill walking, running, cycling, gym workouts, boot camps, etc. You can download a number of free apps, which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MyFitnessPal, MapMyRide, C25K (couch to 5k run) etc.
If you attempt to complete the trek without training it will make each day more difficult than necessary and will hinder your experience and the experience of your teammates.
Will I receive advice and support on training?
In addition to supplying you with training tips and hints, The Different Travel Company has a link with online personal training company Brightside Personal Training, who offer a great value online training package for those who may not have access to fitness advice, tailored to their requirements:
http://brightsidept.kajabi.com/sp/34357
The best training for trekking in the Sahara is hill walking. If you have access to beaches or areas where loose small stones, pebbles or scree exist, this would be the perfect training ground.

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

Trip cost
£275 registration fee payable at time of booking then fund raise at least £2,750 for St Oswald’s Hospice.

What is included?
Trip Includes: Return flights from London* (inc. current taxes & fuel surcharges), all transfers & transport in Morocco, accommodation in 3 star hotels, tents & sleeping mats on trek, all meals, local guides, camels & camel handlers on trek, project materials and coordination, Different Travel tour manager.

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

*Flights from regional airports may be available subject to an additional surcharge.

How will I raise the sponsorship required?
Most people find that this is far easier than they imagined, and we will give you as much support as you need to reach, and even exceed your target! Here are some suggestions for how you could raise your sponsorship. We will send you lots more ideas when you sign up!

- Non-uniform day at local school: £300
- 2 supermarket bag-packing mornings: £500
- Car boot sale/ eBay auction: £250
- Quiz Night: £250
- Sponsorship – friends and family etc.: £300
- Host a party and charge £10 to attend: £400
- Ask five people to raise £100 each: £500
- Dress down day at work: £150
- Lunch money donation: £150
- Donate your skills - babysitting, gardening, DIY: £250
- Karaoke night: £250
- Sponsored beard-shave/ leg wax: £200
Total £3,500

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

How do I sign up?
Complete the booking form and return with your passport copy and registration fee to:

Helen Alderson,
St Oswald’s Hospice
Regent Avenue,
Gosforth,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE3 1EE

Or you can email your completed form to HelenAlderson@stoswaldsuk.org. Once your place is confirmed we will email you a training guide, fundraising pack and much more!
Itinerary

**Day 1 (Saturday 3rd November 2018): London to Marrakech**
We fly together to Marrakech where we are met by our guide and will transfer to a central hotel for the night. Depending on flight arrival times we may start the journey halfway to the desert today and stay in Ouarzazate tonight instead (approx. 4-5 hours).

**Day 2 (Sunday 4th November 2018): Marrakech to Sahara**
If staying in Marrakech we set off early, crossing the Atlas Mountains and following ancient caravan routes into the arid Sahara desert, stopping for lunch in Ouarzazate on the way (journey time approx. 9 hours including stops.) If starting in Ouarzazate the journey is approximately 4-5 hours. This afternoon we will arrive in the desert and be welcomed by the rest of the trek team and the camels before commencing our trek into the vast and arid Sahara desert, stopping overnight to camp under the stars of the Sahara.

Approx. trek distance: 5km.

**Days 3 – 4 (Monday 5th – Tuesday 6th November 2018): Sahara Desert**
Our trek continues through the sand dunes and rocky, lunar landscapes for the next two full days supported by our team of Berber guides, cooks and camel handlers (the camels are our porters, carrying our luggage and equipment). Each day we take a steady pace through the inhospitable but beautiful landscape, while we learn about the importance of respecting the forces of nature in the desert and the culture of the nomadic Berber people. On average we will cover 15-20km per day but this may vary.

**Day 5 (Wednesday 7th November 2018): Sahara to Marrakech**
This morning we trek out of the remote Sahara to the village of Oulad Driss where we bid farewell to the trek team and head back to Marrakech (approx. 9 hours’ drive). Approx. trek distance: 8km.

**Days 6-7 (Thursday 8th – Friday 9th November 2018): Marrakech**
After a good night’s rest at the hotel we spend two days assisting a local community project. Typical tasks include redecorating, refurbishment and painting, creating a garden or generally working to improve the environment. No experience is necessary, just a willingness to get involved.

**Day 8 (Saturday 10th November 2018): Marrakech**
Depending on flight times, enjoy some free time to explore the exotic city of Marrakech before transferring to the airport to fly back to London.

N.B. This itinerary may change due to unusual weather, the ability of the group and so on. We will do our best to keep to the itinerary but we cannot be held responsible for changes that occur outside of our control. In all circumstances your guide and tour leader will have the final say in the interest of the group’s health and safety.