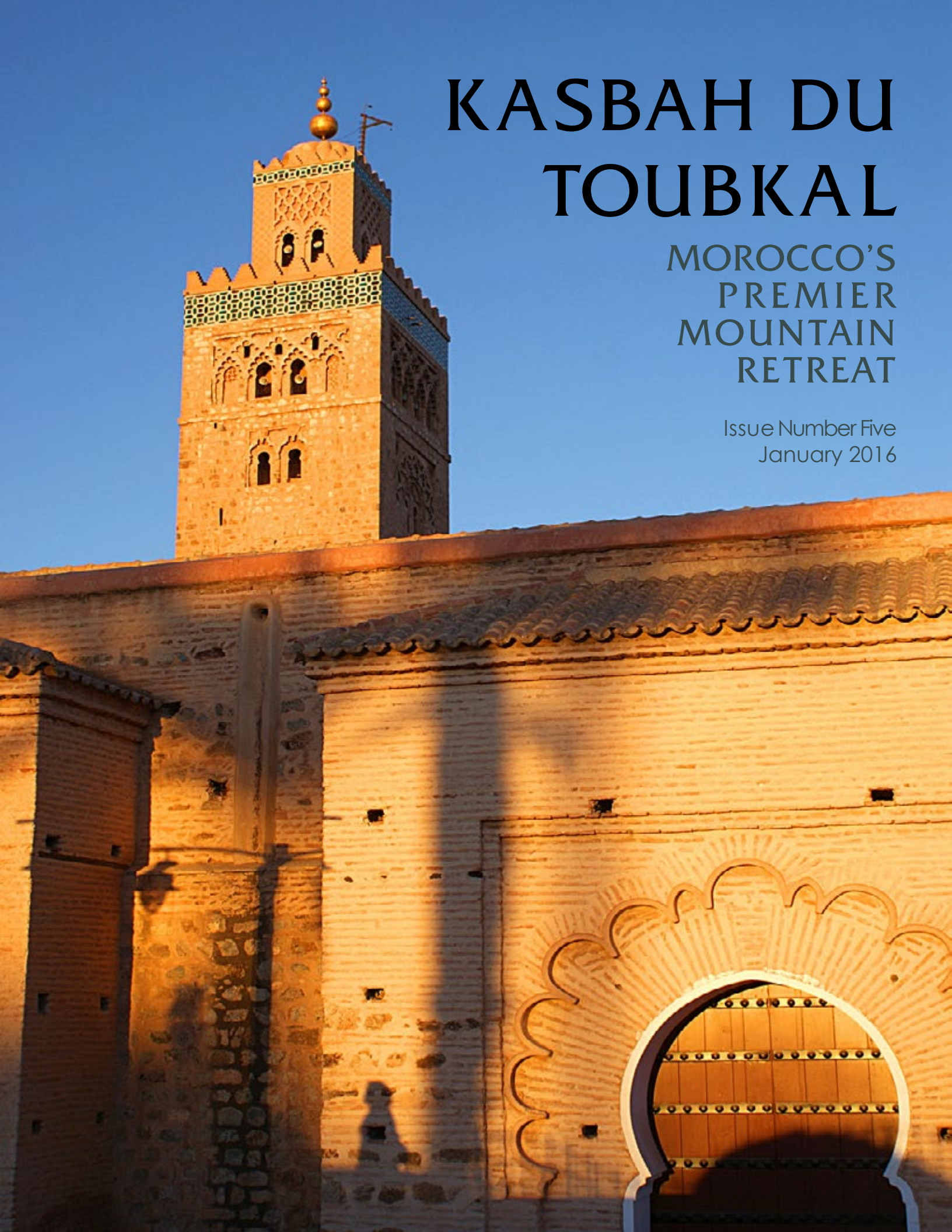




KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

MOROCCO'S
PREMIER
MOUNTAIN
RETREAT

Issue Number Five
January 2016

This is why...





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Warm Blankets and Roaring Fires

Winter has wrapped her crisp arms around the High Atlas Mountains, with Jbel Toubkal sparkling in air that is so sharp it seems to add an extra dimension of clarity to the day. But inside Kasbah du Toubkal all is toasty warm, with glowing fires, glistening candlelight and the pungent aroma of succulent mountain cuisine.

With this issue we begin our second year of the magazine and I'd like to thank everyone for their support, comments and, for me as editor, their compliments. The magazine began as an idea to tell you about what was happening at Kasbah du Toubkal but it soon became clear that while everyone was interested in the 'hotel at the top of the world' they also wanted to know more about Morocco, it's colour, it's culture, it's people. For me, as someone who loves the country, I couldn't have been happier, because it gave me an opportunity to include articles and photos that show how diverse this delightful country is.

If you thought you were too old to hit the saddle, Trevor Rowell writes lyrically about a bike ride with Mike McHugo, rediscovering the backwaters of the days they spent thirty years ago setting up Hobo Travel. You only have a week-end in Marrakech? Find out how to spend a wonderful 24

hours in the Red Rose City. You may have only luxuriated your time at the Kasbah on its sun baked rooftops, but Kasbah du Toubkal has long been a venue for international companies seeking corporate venues of the more unusual kind, charities wishing to offer special trips to raise funds for worthy causes, and schools, colleges and universities who want to offer their students an opportunity to experience life away from the confines of the classroom. In this issue we begin a three-part series showing the 'other side' of the Kasbah, a unique venue for major corporate entities who realise the value of this Berber Hospitality Centre.

And, as ever, I look forward to hearing from you. You can contact me direct at

kasbahmagazine@gmail.com.

Derek Workman

Editor

...and everyone at

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL



Dreams are only the plans of the reasonable



That **MAGICAL** 5%

Getting my hands dirty

Omar Auuzal picks me up in his wagon at the bridge in Imlil for our day out collecting rubbish in the neighbouring villages. Mohamed Bokare, the second collector in the team, hangs onto his platform at the rear of the truck as we set off for our first stop, Tamatert.

For a couple of hours we traipse the village collecting rubbish; worn-out trainers, odd socks, tattered plastic bags, weathered cardboard boxes; even the donkey dung heap gets picked over for wind-blown waste. There's nothing much different to the basic detritus of anywhere in the world, but the age of double- and triple-wrapped everything hasn't arrived here yet and despite the simplicity of the collection process, there's probably less litter here than you'd see in plenty of European villages. It's slow and laborious, but it works.

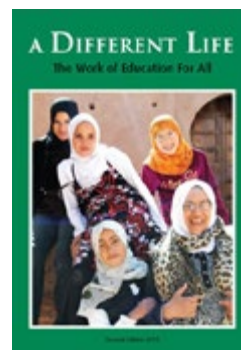
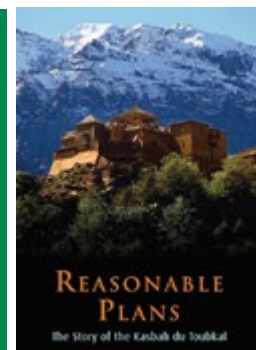
We move on to Arghen, a village on the opposite side of the valley to Tamatert, which until recently had no access other than centuries-old mule tracks. We park on a cutaway above the village and meet Hassan Aitjetame, who is part of the Arghen Village Association (known as Tagmatte, The Family), and is responsible for rubbish collection. I watch the clouds come rolling down from Jbel Toubkal, bringing the rain with them. It's cold and wet and I've forgotten to bring a jacket; this is going to be an uncomfortable experience. Fortunately, the rains drift on down the valley, leaving only a light surface mud for us to slip around in and soggy waste for us to pick up.

The routine is the same as in Tamatert, walking the village street by street, collecting discarded rubbish as we go along. But Arghen is much steeper than

Tamatert, and at some points we are scrambling over scree that moves unsettlingly below my feet. It occurs to me that refuse collectors from European countries who bellyache about the difficulties of having to tow a wheelie-bin two metres to an automated lift on the back of their wagon should be forced to spend a week with Omar and Mohamed.

When we get back to the truck with our load and begin our descent the rains return, leaving great splashes on the windscreen to obscure the view and wetting the rough stones of the twisting road. At each tight turn, Mohamed jumps off his stand at the back and shepherds Omar as he makes his cautious three- and sometimes five-point turns. I don't comment, but a sideways glance at Omar tells me that he's only marginally less nervous than I am. With an almost audible sigh of relief – more on my part than Omar's because I only have to do it this once, whereas he makes the trip weekly – we arrive back at Imlil.

You can read the full story of all these projects and more in



Educate a boy and you educate the man; educate a girl and you educate a family, a community, a nation.

With great thanks to our Patron



We would like to take this opportunity to thank Clive Alderton for being EFA's patron for the past three years. Mr Alderton has left his post as British Ambassador to Morocco to take up a new post as Chief of Staff to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. We wish him the best with his new position and thank him for his and his family's tireless support over these last years. They have opened the doors of their diplomatic residence to the first girls who passed their baccalaureate, handed out hundreds of medals to all the cyclists in the Marrakech Atlas Etape, attended official openings of two of our houses and much more. We look forward to finding a new Patron in the near future who is as passionate about girls' education in Morocco.

Watch Mr Alderton's speech about Education For All at TEDx [Here](#)

YOGA RETREATS IN THE HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS

To learn more about yoga retreats at Kasbah du Toubkal click on the photo

Castle in the sky - one of my favourite places on earth. The location is dreamy the scenery spectacular, the cuisine excellent, the staff outstanding and the warmth and genuine hospitality that welcomes you is second to none. I've organised three yoga holidays to the Kasbah and have already booked for my fourth, as the setup, layout and catering met our every need.

Fenella Lindsell - yoga-forever.com



To download the latest copy of Education For All Newsletter click on the image. Next issue out soon.

Cover photo by

Gerrard Wagemakers

You can see more of his work with the girls from EFA [HERE](#)

Education For All

has recently created a **Corporate Sponsorship Programme**

click on the logo below to find out more



Wilderness... Medical... Training...



You're on a narrow path on the side of a mountain, miles from anywhere. You've been on the trek for three long, exhausting days, covering rough terrain. Suddenly a member of your party slips and cracks a rib on an outcrop of rock. Your years of training as a nurse or doctor equip you to deal with a medical emergency but if those years have only been spent in a surgery or fully-equipped operating theatre would you feel confident that you could handle even something as relatively routine as a cracked rib in cold, rainy conditions?

"You wouldn't expect an expedition doctor to be walking around with his stethoscope around his neck waiting for an emergency to happen," says Barry Roberts. "But if one does it's very important to know how to deal with it in difficult situations and with limited medical equipment."

Roberts is a professional expedition leader with twenty-five diverse international expeditions to his credit. As Commercial Director of Wilderness Medical Training, for more than two decades he and his specialist medical team, who include Dr Dan Morris, a world authority on eye problems at high altitude and Emergency Medicine Consultant Dr Duncan Gray who's worked from Alaska to Antarctica, have become accustomed to

working in all terrains and conditions. Initially the company provided advanced medical training for lay people who were going to remote foreign places to play or work and eventually diverged into training doctors who want to be expedition medics, and also nurses, paramedics, physiotherapists – almost anyone in the medical field. WMT run courses world-wide, but the High Atlas Mountains is very close to Barry Roberts' heart and an ideal place to take medics who may at some point want to be part of a larger expedition.

"Obviously clients get theory and classroom stuff, but almost more importantly they get the acclimatisation, the training treks with some practical training outdoors, and the week culminates with going up Jbel Toubkal, so in one fell swoop we can teach them a huge amount medically, outdoor skill-wise, but also give them the personal experience of climbing a high altitude African mountain with a group of strangers. That's gold dust really in preparing them for being on their own with a group, whether that's going on a charity trek on Kilimanjaro or Everest base camp as the medic." And at 4,200 feet, Jbel Toubkal is the highest mountain in North Africa and a testing trek.

Generally doctors aren't going to be busy doing medical things on an expedition. If they do their job right and people behave sensibly they can side-step serious accidents and injuries. The doctor needs to be part of the group, they need to be good company, they need to be organised, they need to be fit enough, they need to have the right gear. Getting that right takes experience, and what Wilderness Medical Training does is accelerate that learning curve right down to the fact that they spill out the contents of their own



backpacks to show what they take, why they bring some things and not others, why they don't carry some things doctors' might think important. They don't keep any secrets.

"We cover most of the important medical topics but doctors are very clever, they can read the medical stuff in a book. We give them much more, we give them an insight into the kind of experience they're likely to have, what it's like to almost anticipate those problems so that you have a fun and safe time. We share with them our risk assessments, our crisis management plan, the medical kit we bring. We give them a behind the scenes look at what goes through our minds when we set up that week so they benefit from it when they come to be part of their own expedition."

Many of those attending a course will never have been to 4,200 metres before so instead of tackling Toubkal in two tiring days, which is what most trekkers do, WMT spread the trek to three. "We're not trying to turn them into mountain climbers, it is only a trek, and Morocco gives us a chance to bring them to an accessible but challenging environment and for them to get experience of a proper mini-expedition."

Most of us could get up and down the mountain in two days, but it's no fun, and the experiences should

be fun and safe. It's still a challenge to do it in three days and the extra day gives trekkers the opportunity to learn from the accumulated years of WMT experience how to manage a group, how to make it safe and enjoyable, so they can go off and be the medic on a similar type of trip where they would hopefully influence those subtle factors about how fast the group is walking, how they're resting, what they're eating and knowing what the general schedule is in terms of climatizing.

"A testament to that style is that every single person who has been on a trip with us, ten seasons, including some people who have been a bit ill and certainly who have been a bit unfit, have managed to get to the top of Toubkal."

Wilderness Medical Training

Telegraph Travel

Adventure Medic



(Click on logos for more information)

MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE

MARRAKECH TO OUKAÏMEDEN

CHARITY BIKE RIDE - SUNDAY APRIL 24 2016

Marrakech Atlas Etape has been going from strength to strength and is now seen as one of the most inclusive rides in the cycling calendar. If you want to be part of a group taking a comfortable day's ride in the company of friends under blue Moroccan skies or a serious rider setting out to pit yourself against one of the steepest and most grueling climbs of any étape worldwide, make a note of Sunday, April 24th, 2016 in your diary.

To find out more about MAE and to book on-line, click on the logo above, but first watch the video below to see what you will be missing if you don't act soon!



The Marrakech Atlas Etape is an adventure, an experience full of sights and sounds you will never forget.

Nigel Hale-Hunter
BPM Cycling Coach



**WHY DO WE DO IT?
CLICK HERE TO FIND
OUT**

Two *Old* Boys on their Bikes

Thirty years ago Trevor Rowell and Mike McHugo travelled the backroads of the High Atlas Mountains, searching out routes for their fledgling tour company, Hobo Travel. They recently went back, but this time on bikes. Trevor reports.

Bicycling is the nearest approximation I know to the flight of birds. The airplane simply carries man on its back like an obedient Pegasus; it gives him no wings of his own. There are movements on a bicycle corresponding to almost all the variations in flight of the larger birds.

Louis J Halle

"Spring in Washington 1947/57"

Eight of them soared above us, silent and serene, turning and rising on the thermals in the clear blue sky, as we ploughed steadily up the final 12 km of zigzags towards the top of the 2100 metre Tizi n'Test, sweating, weary and saddle sore after four days in the High Atlas mountains, circumnavigating the Toubkal Massif on our beloved bicycles, totally self-sufficient, with all we needed to survive in our panniers.

The paragliders above us were pursuing their high adrenalin passion; they must have looked down on us and wondered why our chosen passion looked so much like masochism. Why, in a world of air conditioned 4x4's, always within a day's drive of a luxury hotel with clean beds and warm showers, did we choose to cover 400 km of steep (often VERY steep) back roads through the mountains, eating processed cheese and date sandwiches, or omelettes when we passed roadside cafés, sleeping on the ground in a tiny tent or in 50 dirham per night hotels in grubby towns?

As we careered down the north side of the pass on day five, flat out towards the final sting-in-the-tail hill out of Ouirgane, to cold beers at La Bergerie and a

rendezvous with Hajj Maurice from Kasbah du Toubkal, we knew exactly why.

We had soared, we had glided, we had been eagles, using our own energy to conquer nature; rewarded with heart aching views across barren silent mountains, brief encounters with astonishingly friendly local people, many of whom probably rarely saw tourists, let alone two obviously elderly English men on bikes: we had laughed, sworn, ached, hallucinated about the next possible coffee stop. Not a quick walk to Starbucks or Costa for a cappuccino to wash down a chocolate muffin, but a hard rough road to a Nescafe, whitened with Nido (which in

Mike's case had to be drunk at thermonuclear temperatures before the Nido formed a skin on the top). Yes my respect for this tough man whom I have often looked upon as an ascetic hero, faltered when he added boiled eggs to the list of unpalatable sustenance.

How can anything replace the joy of finding a Moroccan cafe advertising pizzas in Aoulouz on day three, only to be told the pizza cook had gone home sick and we had to settle for the sixth omelette of the trip: the laughter when offered a comprehensive menu in a





hard labour, co-operation and generations of handed down knowledge. To even begin to experience any of these things, you need to pass through the mountains slowly and engage with both the environment and the people face to face. What better way to do this than on a bicycle, the greatest achievement of man's ingenuity. I feel honoured to have been able to do this.

Would I do it again? Tomorrow! I already hope to cycle a similar route in April after the Marrakech Atlas Etape, and Discover intends to follow the route with a small supported group in April 2017 - don't miss it.

hotel in Ait Benhaddou, which we poured over making our choices, to be told we could have anything on the menu as long as it was *couscous*: the soul searching as we drank a cooling banana milkshake after a thoroughly enjoyable and hard earned 20 km downhill section, to find out we had overshot our turning by every one of those 20 km.

We left our expectations behind as the reality far surpassed them in every respect; this had been the Morocco of our youth, wild and unpredictable but with a beauty that can reduce you to tears; an emptiness and simplicity that is increasingly hard to find on our crowded planet Earth. A distant faint call to prayer on a cold, dark early morning beneath a humbling blanket of stars, which many of our children will never experience because of our insatiable demand for electric light.

We rode down the old Canon Track from the Tizi n'Tichka road, passing what remains of the infamous kasbah at Telouet, described in Gavin Maxwell's *Lords of the Atlas*; a route we had pioneered in our Land Rovers over thirty years ago and which has lost none of its stark beauty. On to cycle a track we have long looked at and wondered about but never had the time to explore, between Agouim on the Tichka road and Aoulouz on the Taroudant road; finally over the legendary Tizi n'Test, built by the French Foreign Legion, and back to Marrakech. Four hundred kilometres of everything that makes Morocco special, even as we progress into the 21st century and countries and towns become homogenised.

To float high above the mountains beneath a paraglider wing will undoubtedly give you rewarding views of the High Atlas, but these mountains are more than views; they are harsh and unforgiving and the people who live in them cling to a fragile lifestyle, which demands



Join the 'Two Old Boys' for a ride

Would you like to join Trevor and Mike to repeat their ride and help girls from the High Atlas Mountains fulfill their dreams?

See page 11 for more information

Corporate Kasbah

Arrive at most hotels for a leadership training week and you will be met by liveried flunkies who make sure your passage from limo to luxury room will be as fluid as a gently meandering river. Arrive at a leadership training at Kasbah du Toubkal at night, when the streets of Imlil are deathly quiet and you will be told to get on a mule – not asked, told. “It’s part of the experience,” says Steve Carter, “because that ride up the steep zigzag path under the walnut trees in the dark is such a totally contradictory experience to what most visitors would expect that their heads are going to be in a totally different place from when they landed at Marrakech”. And that’s what Steve Carter wants. “The Kasbah removes the permafrost from around their thinking.”

In 2000 Carter, in the shape of Apter Development, was asked to set up a leadership experience for the Boots Company – more affectionately known to one and all simply as Boots the Chemist. They wanted a venue that would challenge senior managers’ assumptions. “By the time somebody gets to a middle or a senior manager they probably have done quite a lot of rounds in corporate hotels, which becomes a learned behavior. They sit around tables and go into small syndicate rooms

with small flip-charts and they get very good at doing that, but by the time you get to the sort of people we’re dealing with you’ve got to challenge their assumptions and challenge their thinking, and that’s what we were asked to do for Boots.”

Most organisations still basically have a hierarchical, bureaucratic mindset, lots of divisionalisation about the bits of the business – ‘silos’ they are called – where people look after their little bit and don’t connect things together particularly well. “At somewhere like the Kasbah you never really find out who’s in charge. Some days you think one person’s in charge and sometimes another, and that actually reflects the



(click on logo to visit website)

challenge for organisations to let the right leadership emerge for the particular job or project they are dealing with. How the Kasbah operates somehow reflects that. The whole place is a brilliant analogy for a lot of good things.”

As part of their work Apter are always very careful to tell delegates the story of the Kasbah. One of the most powerful ways that they communicate about what leadership is, is by telling stories. “When the Kasbah started they used the use local labour force to build the place instead of bringing in people from Marrakech. They had to work with the Berber population, and because the way the Berber culture works is fairly centre-less, they had to create the village association so they had something that could engage the whole village community in what was going on. Every guest has an automatic 5% added to their bill, on a ‘no-pay, no-stay basis’. This money goes to





Association Bassins d'Imlil, the association that covers seven villages in the valley and supervises development. In a time when organisations are increasingly called upon to demonstrate their connection with the broader society, the Kasbah is a perfect living example. That's a unique quality of the Kasbah, I don't know anywhere else that nails that, particularly this as well." Apter's style is based on the premise that the key thing that you want to do in a leadership group is to change the conversation, because by changing the

conversation you start to change the behaviour. Quite often leaders don't have the right conversations with the right people, and they don't have them the right way.

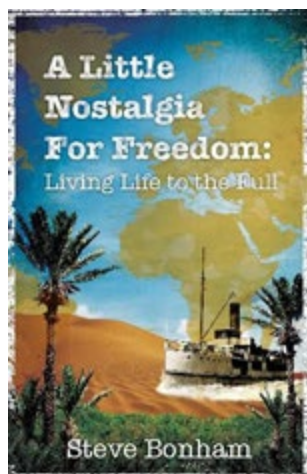
"The Kasbah's a big player in that experience. That's why it's so different. You're trying to open up someone's field of vision, to get them to think about new things. There's a famous saying, 'The fish is the last thing to discover the sea.' Delegates are often so used to seeing the world as limited possibilities that one of the first things you have to do to demonstrate leadership in an organisation is to increase that sense of possibility. That process is a fundamental piece of inspiration, using the original Latin meaning of the word 'to breathe'. The Kasbah is about that inspiration and there are relatively few places that can do that."

There are plenty of places that can give you space to breathe and be inspired, but there's something that's almost indefinable to Steve Carter that brings him back time after time.

"It's a unique combination of a very arcane character that you can never quite get your head around. A mixture of the Berber hospitality – and with the Berber people hospitality is a real, meaningful word – and English eccentricity. Absolutely delightful. The idiosyncratic style works because they are also hospitable. They can make anything happen. Everyone loves it because they aren't working with a formal hotel with trained automata, they are dealing with real people, and that's really appreciated."

Click [HERE](#) to download the Kasbah du Toubkal Corporate and Conference Facilities PDF

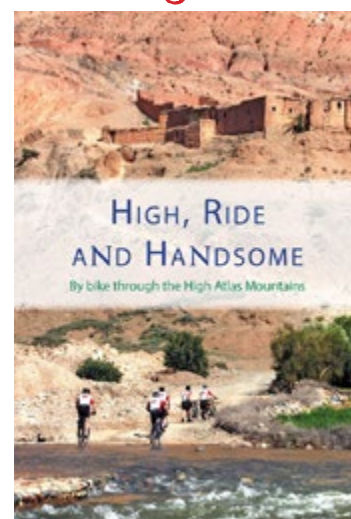
Read more about the Kasbah and a trek up Jbel Toubkal in this extract from



Ride with the Two Old Boys

Directly after the **Marrakech Atlas Etape** in April 2017 Trevor Rowell and Mike McHugo will lead a group of adventurous cyclists to repeat their 400km ride. The event will take place between 29th April and 6th May and will be limited to fifteen riders. There will be full vehicle support so everyone is welcome. You don't have to be super-fit to enjoy this superb ride, knowing that you are also supporting **Education For All**. For more information contact Mike McHugo at mike@discover.ltd.uk.

High, Ride and Handsome gives you a taster of the joys of cycling in the High Atlas Mountains. Click on the cover photo to find out more.





24 Hours in Marrakech

Millions of words have been written about Jmaa el Fna, North Africa's most vibrant and exotic square, the ancient heart of Marrakech. As lyrical as the writers might be, nothing prepares you for the reality.

Walk across La Place, as it's known locally, and the changing music from CD stalls, snake charmer's pipes, ancient cassette players, gnawa musicians and the jangling castanets of the transvestite dancers is like tuning a radio deep in the heart of Africa, when stations were found by turning a knob and not by pushing a button.

Take a café-crème on the terrace of Café de France and watch the bustle of life in the square before the razzle-dazzle of the souks and their arms-width alleyways entice you, in search of brightly coloured babouche (soft leather slippers), intricately pierced lamps and sumptuous carpets.

Shop owners will invite you in to see their wares, but the days are long gone when you would be hustled, grabbed or coerced by supposed guides or traders. When Mohammed VI ascended the Moroccan throne in July, 1999, he was fully aware of the importance of tourism to his country, and one of the first laws he passed was the prohibition of anyone making any form of physical contact or over-forceful selling to visitors. He established a plain-clothes Tourism Police Department who patrol the main tourist areas, with rights of arrest and hefty fines. The initiative has been such a success that even locals themselves and other shop-keepers will come to your aid if they see you being pestered in any way.

Marrakech is full of superb restaurants, but if you fancy lunch like a local, try one of the tiny cupboard-size cafes where single-portion tajines are cooked on a hot-plate while the cook flips battered fish, deep-fried in a blackened old frying pan.

You might like to think ahead to dinner and a

return to Jmaa el Fna. When dusk falls, handcarts are wheeled into the square and unfolded to reveal portable grills, tables, benches, pots and pans. There are stalls to fit every taste and pocket, and aromas of the east flood your nostrils as the smoke rises from the enormous selection of food being prepared. Dive in and delight your taste-buds, although you may want to leave the tajine of sheep's or calf's feet and the sliced camel's head to the locals to enjoy, and it would take a certain amount of culinary courage to sample a cooked sheep's head or bowl of sheep's testicles.

For a totally contrary view of the medina, and a change from the skinny medieval alleyways inside the walls, a ride in a caleche, the elegant green horse-drawn carriages that you see clip-clopping all around Marrakech will take you on a romantic tour around the rose-pink, ancient walls of the city and onwards



to the Palmeraie, a large palm oasis north of the city, where the upper-crust hide themselves away in stunning homes. If you feel a bit Lawrence of Arabia-ish you can take a camel ride while in the Palmeraie. (Although don't make your calèche wait, get a taxi instead.) On your way back you could ask the driver to drop you off at the Jardin Majorelle, but even if you get there by some other means, you really must visit these glorious gardens.

French artist Jacques Majorelle moved to Marrakech in 1919, not just to improve his tuberculosis but to continue his career as an artist. He bought a large piece of land in the then outskirts of the city and began to create what became his greatest masterpiece – the Majorelle Gardens. An inspired and obsessive plant hunter, Majorelle filled his gardens with plants from around the world – impossible to do these days – and set them against his trademark 'Majorelle blue', an extraordinarily vivid colour, said to be based on the robes of the Tuareg.

When Jacques Majorelle died in 1962, the garden fell into neglect, until it was bought in 1980, by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, to save it from property developers and to bring it back to life. The layout of the gardens has remained much the same for almost ninety-five years and is total delight, a corner of tranquillity in this hectic city.

A ten-minute meander from the gardens takes you to the heart of Gueliz, the modern side of Marrakech, with all the fancy shops, ice-cream parlours, cafes and restaurants your heart desires.

If you have ever thought of belly dancing as being a bit old hat, you've never been to Le Comptoir Darna in Marrakech. Just on midnight the lights lower, vibrant music fills the air. Four tall men in white robes and turbans descend the stairs with a palanquin shouldered between them. On the small platform a curved figure is sheeted in white. Behind the palanquin sway two women in shimmering floor-length dresses; on their heads are balanced silver trays, glistening with lighted candles. As they shimmy and sway down the stairs the candle flames perform their own iridescent sparkling dance.

A burst of music, and a flurry of red and white butterflies in slit-sided silk pantaloons clasped at the ankle, twirl and swirl diaphanous shawls; broad sparklingly embroidered waistbands paired with lustrously beaded and shimmering bra tops – the belly dancers, the luscious ladies of the raqs sharqi, enter the room with a fanfare and sensual exuberance. They weave between the tables, their hips gyrating and flicking in a staccato rhythm. A thing of beauty and a joy to behold.



The *beauty* of *both* Worlds



MARRAKECH RIAD AND THE HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS

A two-centre holiday for 7 nights staying at the award-winning Kasbah du Toubkal in the High Atlas and Riad Les Yeux Bleus in Marrakech

Stand almost anywhere in Marrakech looking south and the High Atlas Mountains form a scenic backdrop as vivid to the memory as any theatre, dominated by Jbel Toubkal, the highest mountain in North Africa that gives its name to both the national park and the Kasbah du Toubkal. Merely to mention the name 'Marrakech' conjures up images of the souk, a jewel box of visual delights. This holiday package combines a visit to the spectacular High Atlas Mountains of Morocco with a stay in the exotic city of Marrakech, the fabled red city, which has been a magnet for travellers for centuries.

Kasbah du Toubkal

Award-winning Kasbah du Toubkal, just 60km from Marrakech, is set on a hilltop in the Toubkal National Park, below the towering flanks of Jbel Toubkal, the highest mountain in North Africa. Overlooking Imlil, a traditional trekking village, the Kasbah is a Berber Hospitality Centre – stressing hospitality over traditional hotel service – for individuals and groups. The village and its surrounding valleys are a world apart from the bustle of the city and a place of peace and seclusion.

Les Yeux Bleus

Located in the Bab Doukkala district, one of the most popular and picturesque quarters of the medina, and just ten minutes on foot from the square of Jemaa el Fna in the heart of Marrakech, Riad Les Yeux Bleus features eight comfortable bedrooms – each one decorated in its own style – distributed around two charming patios; two pools, a library, a hammam, and a magnificent roof terrace with a bar. The perfect place for you to relax after a hard day of exploring the wonders of Marrakech.



With several peaks above 4,000 metres, the Western High Atlas is part of a larger chain of mountains that spreads from the Atlantic Coast in the west to The Mediterranean coast in the east. The mountains are home to the indigenous Berber people who have inhabited Morocco for at least five thousand years. The Berbers live in small clusters of earthen adobe houses which cling precipitously to mountainsides and are often only accessible by mule or foot.



Marrakech is a fascinating city that is high on the list of places to visit by the discerning traveller. It comprises the medina, the old Arab quarter built around the 12th century Koutoubia Mosque whose beautiful minaret dominates the skyline and can be seen from almost every approach to the city, and also the new town of Guéliz, with its modern restaurants and bars, fast-food chains and big brand stores.

Relax at the Kasbah or trek the mountains

For the first part of your holiday you will stay in our luxury accommodation at the stunning Kasbah du Toubkal in the trailhead village of Imlil, just 40 miles from Marrakech but seemingly a

thousand miles from the hubbub of the city. Accommodation is on a half board basis with breakfast and evening meal provided. This will enable you to either enjoy lunch at the Kasbah or locally in Imlil. Should you opt for a full day's trek, lunch is included in the full day trekking costs.

Explore the ancient and fascinating city of Marrakech

For the second part of your holiday you will stay on a B&B basis in the spectacular Riad Les Yeux Bleus ideally located in the old Medina in the exotic city of Marrakech. As your accommodation in Marrakech is on a B&B basis you may choose to dine at the riad or take the opportunity to eat at some of the many superb restaurants in the city, the choice is yours.

[Click on the logo to download more information and a full itinerary.](#)

DISCOVER LTD



Essaouira

Famed for its laid-back atmosphere
Essaouira has an equally good reputation
for its fabulous fish

I've never been a great lover of fish, other than for the few months I lived in Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, a town famous for its sherry, flamenco (where it was supposedly born), and being the home of the Royal Andalusian horse dancing school, none of which particularly enthused me, although it did have the most incredible fish market. (And, apropos of nothing at all, Jerez is near Cadiz, the first city and port in Europe, and where that supposed icon of British gastronomy – deep fried fish – was born, invented by the Jewish community as a Shabbat meal because it could be eaten cold.)

But I'm, a couple of thousand miles south, in Essaouira, Morocco's home of the 'laid back' on the southern Atlantic coast, and just the place to sample the best fish in the country.

The quayside in the harbour around noon is where the words 'hustle' and 'bustle' were made for. Men and women alike, young and old, haggle over sardines sparkling in wooden boxes of crushed ice, dorada still with a salt-sea smell, family-size octopi, and some seriously ugly specimens that look terrifying even when dead.



I discuss my lunch requirements with Hamid, a fisherman selling his catch from a box filled with crushed ice. A fine dorada is selected and a handful of fat sardines – and Hamid has a big hand. The seven he drops on a piece of paper alongside the dorada are far more than I would normally eat. For this lot I pay the princely sum of twenty dirhams. When I hand over the money, Hamid tries to put another dorada on the pile, just for friendship's sake, but I tell him that as much as I appreciate his generosity, it would probably end up being eaten by one of the street cats because I have enough for a grand lunch already.

I stroll over to 'grill street' in the narrow alleyways off Derb Chbanat, where cubby-hole restaurants prepare tajines of slow-food takeaways. On the way I pick up a bottle of Poms, my favourite sparkling apple juice when I'm in Morocco. I put myself and my plastic bag of fish in the hands of Madame Hadija, who whisks them away to clean and grill.

In the small square, charcoal grills made from large cans cut in half are set up on rickety tables thrown together out of odds and ends of lumber. Three worn out white plastic garden tables and seven chairs shunted together below a pair of beach umbrellas provide the dining area of Madame Hadija's establishment, a place where locals sit and exchange a few words if no-one is using the chairs for commercial purposes. Three one-person tajines rest on top of individual charcoal burners, and are constantly being replaced as they are carried away for someone's lunch. When one is removed the coals are given a quick rake over and top up, with a breeze from a small circular ventilation wall fan held in Madame Hadija's hand to get the coals glowing before another tajine

is set in place. As the smoke wafts along the light breeze through the alleyways the aromas of grilling fish perfume the air.

Like a sommelier showing the label of an expensive bottle of wine, Lahcen, the man who is to cook my sardines, holds them up in the fold-over grill for my inspection before putting them on his round charcoal burner. The local bakery is literally a hole in the wall, and while my sardines are cooking Madame Hadija walks over and buys the small flat loaf I'm to eat with my fish.

As much as I like dorado, I've never been a fan of either sardines or charcoal grills, but with something so fresh from the catch, a large squeeze of lemon and Lahcen's decades of experience I'm converted, although my problem is the same as it is with making a decent cup of mint tea. Can I produce this splendid flavour at home?



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