

MOROCCO EXPEDITION 2011

This summer two teams of year 12 and 13 students undertook the journey of a lifetime to Morocco. Following a year of careful planning, the highly anticipated day arrived and we were off.

Team A

Team A were greeted by the hustle and bustle of Marrakesh, and the busy atmosphere only made us more excited to explore Morocco. By the next day we were setting up our tents in the remote Mid-Atlas mountains, ready to begin our project phase. We helped a local association to clear and level the ground for a football pitch and even held a sports day for the local community. However, we found, to much confusion, that there were no flushing toilets in sight. It was then that we spotted a shovel. We were not amused.

Next, we embarked upon our challenge: summiting the highest peak in North Africa, Mt Toubkal. None of us could have imagined how demanding the climb would



prove to be; following only 4 hours of sleep, 2.00am arrived and we began trekking by starlight. Our teamwork was put to the test as the brutally cold conditions and high altitude took their toll on some members of the team. Slowly but surely we continued, singing Rihanna songs to keep spirits up and six hours later, we all stood at the summit. Yet the challenge was not over: our tour guide

then decided it would be funny to watch us descend down a scree slope. It was not funny. Six more hours and many bruises later, we were back at base camp.

Our next stop was the Sahara desert, where the scorching fifty five degree heat hit us - our initial decision to trek into the desert was quickly abandoned, as we opted for an easy, short walk to the closest dunes, followed by an afternoon in the pool of a nearby posh hotel instead. I'm not sure that the guests were expecting a group of excited girls to descend upon them, but they took it in good humour – if only they knew we were only there to get clean after a week of camping and trekking... With the expedition almost drawing to a close, we returned to Marrakesh where we were let loose in the souks to haggle and bargain for souvenirs.



MOROCCO EXPEDITION 2011

Team B

After a lot of tears and hugs we sadly left our parents behind on build up day, both anxious and excited about the journey that awaited us. On the day of departure, after a very uncomfortable night on the floor of the sixth for common room, we awoke early and were all in a frantic rush to get ready in time for the coaches to pick us up. This proved to be the first time that our team dynamics were tested and our first team leaders were challenged to see how well they could control and manage the rest of our team.



After a few stressful hours where most of us were still sleepy, we managed to get onto the coach on time, and were on our way to the airport. Although, there was a slight delay due to an unexpected stopover in Madrid, we managed to get our entire team on the flight, without losing anybody and soon found ourselves on our way to Morocco. When we took off from England, this was the first time that



it really hit us; we were going to leave our parents, families, friends and luxuries behind for two weeks. Our journey had truly begun.

The time in Morocco was divided into three phases which consisted of a project phase, challenge phase and a rest and relaxation phase. We began with the project phase for which we worked with a women's association and some of the local Berber women to help

redecorate their shops. We also built podiums, stands and rug racks. We hadn't expected the overwhelming heat and long working hours to prove such a challenge. However after a couple of days adjusting to the way of life in Morocco through self-determination, team motivation and co-operation, we managed to successfully complete our task. We felt



overwhelmed with pride and a great sense of accomplishment when we looked at what we had achieved.

Our challenge phase consisted of a mentally and physically challenging trek which took place in the valleys of the Dades Gorge. We all found this a great challenge. However with the great determination, support and encouragement that we all managed to give each other, we worked together to complete the hardest part of our

MOROCCO EXPEDITION 2011

expedition. In doing so, we felt a great sense of relief and pride. We enjoyed our last few days of rest and relaxation by travelling to the Casades d'Ouzoud waterfall and to Marrakesh for shopping at the world renowned souks.

Before we knew it, we were at Gatwick again. We had fully appreciated what could be accomplished in 14 days. We had learned a lot about each other and ourselves and went home as a team of more confident, experienced and independent people, with a collection of memories to last us a lifetime. We would like to thank Mr Doree, Mr Saxton and Ms Sharif for providing us with this wonderful opportunity.

From the lifetime friends we made, the challenges we faced and overcame together to the development we made as individuals, Morocco was truly an experience of a lifetime!



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