

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

**MOROCCO'S PREMIER
MOUNTAIN RETREAT**

Issue Number Six
April 2016



MARRAKECH

The new Travelers' Choice #1 Destination in the World





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The sun has got his hat on

We're coming into spring, one of the most beautiful times of the year in the High Atlas Mountains as the world comes alive and Jbel Toubkal begins to slowly shrug off its blanket of snow – although it will be a few months yet before its peak stops sparkling in the morning sunlight.

It's the perfect time for a hammam, a steamy rejuvenation before slipping into a djellaba for dinner – a marked contrast to lunch in T-shirt and shorts on one of the roof terraces.

And it's the terraces that attract so many to the yoga courses held regularly at the Kasbah, where participants meditate and exercise in the tranquillity and unpolluted surroundings of the Toubkal Natural Park.

In the second part of our series about groups who use the Kasbah we hear from teachers who consider the special atmosphere of the Imlil Valley the perfect spot for fieldwork but also interaction with local people that gives their students an added appreciation that life isn't all about Facebook and smartphones.

But perhaps the biggest news is that Marrakech has

been voted the number one Travelers' Choice Destination in the World by TripAdvisor reviewers (which comes as no surprise to those of us who live here). Some of the most popular holidays booked through Discover Ltd are those that share their time between the exotic and heady lifestyle of the Red Rose City and the peaceful rhythm of life in the High Atlas that shows the contrasts and delights of this colourful, enigmatic country. If you would like to know more about these two-centre holidays please click the Discover logo on the left.

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



Click [HERE](#) to follow us on Instagram. If you have any photographs you'd like to share of your stay with us, please tag them with @kasbahdutoubkal. We'd be delighted to share them on our page.

Dreams are only the plans of the reasonable



That MAGICAL 5%

An Association of Ideals

When scouts for Kundun, Martin Scorsese's 1997 epic about the early life of the Dalai Lama, chanced across the recently finished first stage of the Kasbah du Toubkal, they thought it would be ideal for the scene in which the Dalai Lama escapes across the Himalayas from Tibet to India, the glowering peak of Jbel Toubkal being as near to the famous Tibetan mountains as they could get. Payment for services and extras is usually made on a person-by-person basis, with a fee going to the owners of the location, but it was agreed that the fee was to go to the seven villages in the valley to provide much needed services for the greater good of all. It was decided to create the Association Bassins d'Imlil, the Association of Villages of the Imlil Valley, who would receive the fee and use it as a basis for funding future projects, supplemented by the magical five per cent each client pays on top of their bill at Kasbah du Toubkal.

Collective decision-making is nothing new in Moroccan culture; they have a history of respected villagers being asked to act on behalf of their neighbours in deciding which projects would most benefit the village as a whole and how they would be implemented and funds raised. An example of this is the irrigation system that feeds the terraces to water the apple, cherry and walnut orchards that are the main cash crops of the Imlil valley. For generations an annual meeting decides how much water each plot of land is to receive, according to its size and crop, but with the Association Bassins d'Imlil, the villages have an

umbrella association, and more importantly, a source of funding separate from each independent village, giving the opportunity to help fund larger projects that would benefit the villages both individually and collectively. Even though the Association is predominantly devoted to projects within the Imlil Valley, it has also funded a number of projects in neighbouring villages and valleys.

Very few villages in Morocco are as lucky as Imlil and the six other villages in the Association Bassins d'Imlil. You only have to look at the other valleys to see the difference that these projects have made. Anyone has the right to put forward a project, all they have to do is take their idea to the governing committee. If the Association thinks it's worthwhile they will be given the money to do it. Local people recognise that the Association does a great deal of good for their villages and their lives, and they recognise also that it is through the five per cent surcharge on client's bills made by the Kasbah, and other donations made by visitors, that they have a way of life denied to many other remote locations.

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.



We may not individually be able to change the world but we can help to make a difference to a person's life and indirectly many more



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

It's not too late to register for the **MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE** in support of Education For All
To see why we do it watch the video on Page 12



Hear the girls themselves talk about their lives with **Education for All** in their own video.

*'When you see the flower, you know the fruit will come and it will be nice!
When I think of education I think that the future will be good'*

Said by a young EFA girl

Looking after 186 boisterous girls eager to get on with their education, it is an ever-increasing task to raise the money needed to support them. A task – never a burden. While we are enormously grateful for the assistance large businesses and funding organisations offer it's also special that so many people have taken Education For All to their individual and collective hearts.

Long-time supporters Bristol Grammar School chose EFA as their charity of the year in 2015 and raised over £4000! This will be put towards the new audio-visual room and solar heating system in Asni 3. We are so grateful for everyone at BGS and all our school supporters who raise money for us each year. Another key supporter for this year is a Dutch charity, TheDutch4Kids, who organise an annual charity golf day in Holland to support a variety of causes. We were delighted to have been chosen this year, and the event raised 25,000€ for EFA. This will sponsor a whole house for 2016.

Education For All has recently created a **Corporate Sponsorship Programme** click the logo above to find out more



Volubilis

The ancient capital of the Kingdom of Mauritania, Volubilis was the Roman Empire's most remote outpost in North Africa, their conquering legions unable to subdue the Berber tribes of the Atlas.

Stand at the triple-arched Tingis gate, the northernmost of the entrances to Volubilis and look down the wide sweep of the Decumanus Maximus, the main thoroughfare. The remains of pillars and square stone blocks that once marked the entrance to colonnaded shops look, when viewed side on, like rows of regimented tombstones in a graveyard, blackened with age.

At the bottom of the single row of well-worn and uneven paving slabs, all that is left of a paved avenue, sits the triumphal arch of Emperor Caracalla. To your left, the remains of the most important public spaces; the Corinthian columns of the Capitoline temple, raised by a flight of thirteen steps; the Basilica, the courthouse and government administration, alongside which is the Forum, the 1,300 square metre market place, originally lined with temples, small public offices, and niches containing statues of emperors and local dignitaries. All with the backdrop of long, long vistas, once overflowing with olive groves, and wheat fields.

Volubilis is undoubtedly the finest Roman ruin in the whole of Morocco, established as a camp

in 45AD when Emperor Claudius officially annexed North African Mauritania. The city was the end of the imperial road in one of Rome's most remote outposts, as the legions at Rome's command were never able to subdue the Berber tribes of the Atlas.

A little over two centuries later, in 280, Roman rule collapsed when the empire almost disintegrated through internecine warfare, assassinations and palace coups. Volubilian sharp cookies, aware of the upheaval, buried their hoards of money and fine bronze statues under their villas for safekeeping, which only saw the light of day again 1,700 years later.

In its heyday, Volubilis was an affluent provincial capital of around 20,000 people, its wealth based on the export of olives, olive oil and wheat to Rome, and wild animals to face the gladiators in arenas throughout the Roman Empire. It's said that during their two hundred year occupation not only was Volubilis one of the gems of the Roman Empire in North Africa but it was also the site of a major ecological disaster. Vast swathes of forests were cleared to create space to grow the enormous quantity of wheat needed to meet the annona, the



free grain allowance that was every Roman citizen's basic right, while the hunting of wild animals for gladiatorial games almost drove indigenous species such as the Atlas Bear and the Barbary Lion into extinction. Both sides of the 'bread and circuses' coin by which the emperors controlled the population.

The importance of Volubilis is displayed in the beauty of its buildings. The Basilica, in its time one of the finest Roman basilicas in Africa, originally had two floors, and was the hub of the city's legal administration. Beside it, the Capitoline Temple held great sway in public life, where assemblies would be held before it to call on the gods for aid or to thank them for the successful completion of the more important civic undertakings, one of the primary ones being fighting wars.

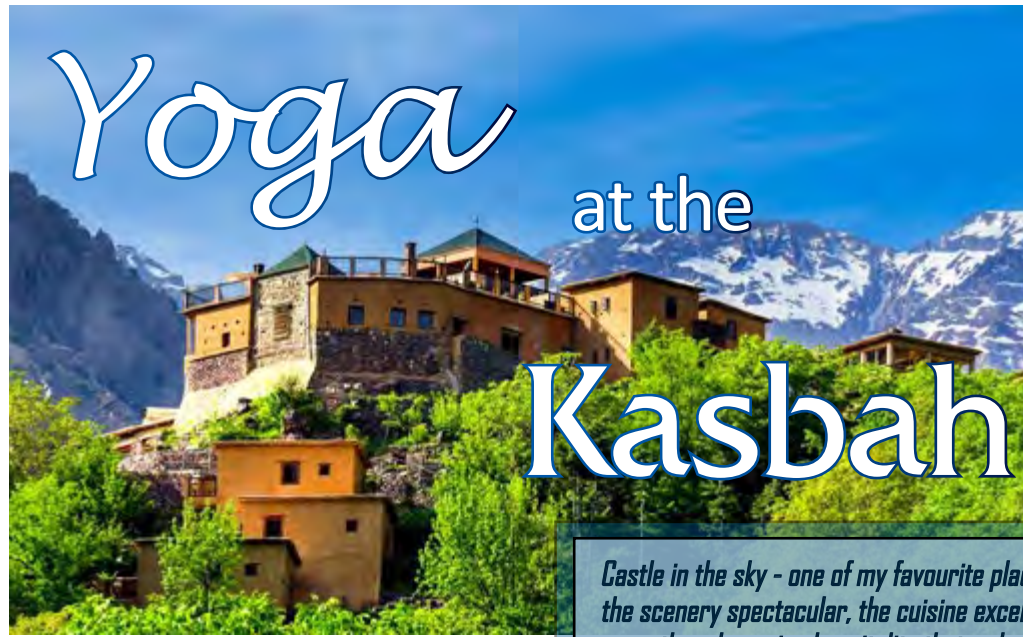
The Decumanus Maximus was the commercial heart of Volubilis, (and also the best address). A grand paved avenue, it had arcaded porticoes shading its sidewalks on either side and dozens of shops for the residents of this upper class neighbourhood to browse during their daily promenade. You will occasionally see small stone blocks with images carved on them scattered on the ground; these would have been the shop's sign to indicate its wares.

It's behind these shops, in the mansions of the city's elite, that some of the jewels of Volubilis can be found, the mosaics with their dominant themes of Greek myths that make this Roman outpost so important. Look for the solitary cypress tree to the east of the Decumanus Secundus and follow the narrow streets between the memory of walls that were once the homes of the rich and notable, and you arrive at the House of Venus, one of the most luxurious residences in the city. The mosaic for which the house is named is now in a museum in Rabat, but two extant

mosaics show the sensual side of the art. *The Abduction of Hylas by Nymphs* shows Hylas, Hercules' 'companion', dressed in nothing more than a deep orange robe and a headful of cascading blonde locks, being abducted by two water nymphs, a theme that has endured in Western classical art, while the slightly more salacious mosaic shows the Diana, goddess of the hunt, being surprised by the hunter Actaeon while bathing. Actaeon was probably equally surprised when the goddess punished him by turning him into a stag. Unable to explain his predicament to his hunting friends he was tracked down by his own dogs and killed. Perhaps it would have been better if she had used a bigger towel.

As grand as the ruins of Volubilis are, they would have been grander still but for two events; the 17th century pillaging of the site by Moulay Ismail for marble columns and artistic architecture to adorn his sumptuous palaces in Meknes, and the earthquake in 1755 that also flattened Lisbon and left Rabat's Hassan Mosque as little more than rows of pillared stumps. But nonetheless, still glorious in its ruination.





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

Kasbah du Toubkal

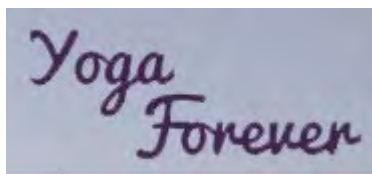
Sitting at 1820m with spectacular views over the villages of the Imlil Valley and with Jbel Toubkal, North Africa's highest mountain, as a backdrop, Kasbah du Toubkal provides a unique environment for those seeking a peaceful location to practise yoga and yoga-related activities. With its tranquil beauty, healthy cuisine made from fresh local produce, superbly comfortable bedrooms and attentive Berber staff, the Kasbah has become very popular with instructors seeking a stress-free environment for their students to fully appreciate the beauty of yoga, as much a meditation as an elegant physical exercise. The area offers opportunities to explore the local villages and take guided walks to see this stunning region. If you are an experienced walker a trek to the top

of Jbel Toubkal – done in the inimicable Kasbah style – will provide memories for a life time, but whether it's a stiff trek or a saunter through the walnut groves, indulging yourself in our private hammam adds that extra touch of Moroccan magic to your stay at our Berber hospitality centre.

Click on the logo to download more information and a full itinerary.



For more information about individual yoga courses please click on their logo



I held my first course at the Kasbah four years ago and I've never looked back, I absolutely love it. It has a level of service and genuine friendship from the staff who could not make you more welcome if they tried, they are completely fabu-

lous. It meets my expectations in its simplicity but it has the ability to meet your every need with the greatest of ease. The rest of the world is galluping ahead in terms of technology and sophistication; what the Kasbah manages to do is to retain this absolute uniqueness. It offers the visitor everything you need - you have wifi, you have hot water, you have clean sheets, you have lovely rooms that feel so warm and nurturing and yet you're still going up on a mule, there's no traffic going by. It's something in our modern days that's pretty hard to access only four hours from London.

Fenella Lindsell



We discovered Kasbah du Toubkal in 2013 and once inside the imposing gate were immediately struck by how perfect a place it would be to run a yoga retreat. There is a stunning terrace for great weather yoga and a lovely room beside the garden. After years of regular yoga practice involving going on retreat in Europe, we felt certain that the Kasbah would resonate with keen yogis, with its spectacular setting, spiritual atmosphere and wonderful Berber hospitality. The Kasbah is unique amongst yoga retreat locations - and there are many to compete with! - because it feels like an authentic homestay, but with incredible facilities (the hammam, the individuality of every room) and of course the trekking opportunities right from the front door. There's also something about the way the Kasbah integrates so seamlessly with the Imlil community which makes it particularly fit with the ethos of yoga in general, one in which the inner journey of self-discovery through yoga practice enables more connectedness, less separateness as we move through the world.

*Rosemary Harrison
and Rowna Goldman*



Perumal Koshy, born in India, has teaching experience spanning over two decades across America, Europe and Morocco.

At 13 years of age he began his teaching career, a path that lead him to develop Dynamic Progressive Fusion Yoga. The practice is built on a six-part underlying foundation to feel refreshed, relaxed and simultaneously energized. A progressive approach will allow the student to achieve the right state of flow in order to improve mobility, breathing and circulation while strengthening muscles, tendons and ligaments, leading to genuine mental and physical wellbeing.



For details of this year's full yoga programme contact:
kerrie@discover.ltd.uk



voices of

Experience

As you recline on the roof-top terraces of Kasbah du Toubkal you could imagine that the luxurious rugs, luscious traditional foods, heat and sweat of the relaxing hammam had always been there, the leisurely way of life a feudal baron lived on. Yes, the Kasbah was the home of a caid, but by the time Discover Ltd bought what remained of his summer home there was precious little left standing other than a couple of walls and an old wooden door.

The original intention for Kasbah du Toubkal wasn't to build a unique mountain refuge from the stresses of daily life but as accommodation for schools groups to undertake field studies in an environment as different from their daily life as they could possibly imagine. And while the Kasbah has clothed itself in a style not envisaged in the early days, it still welcomes some of the same teachers who brought eager young students more than twenty years ago.

One of the greatest strengths of Discover Ltd. is that over eighty percent of their clients are long-term, repeat business, built on a working relationship whereby

when a teacher contacts the Discover office they will know that they will be speaking to the same person they spoke to last time and the time before that, and quite possibly for every expedition they've arranged since their first visit to Kasbah du Toubkal. Two of those teachers, Andrew Dimberline Assistant Head at Bristol Grammar and Scott Garrity, Associate Head at Queen Elizabeth School at Ashbourne in Derbyshire, have returned time after time. They tell why.

Andrew Dimberline Assistant Head, Bristol Grammar

My first contact with Discover was when I took a school group from Wolvey High School in the Midlands to Morocco in 1995. We were after adventure, and it was certainly adventurous. It was a very different world than we were used to, particularly back then. We spent the first night at the Hotel Foucauld in Marrakech, and I remember the first morning, waking up and hearing the call to prayer and seeing the donkey carts going past the windows. It was quite amazing really.

It's when you get out into the villages that you really notice the difference. The students begin to realise that the pictures they've seen on TV are actually real, and so is the genuine hardship that these mountain people have to live with, especially as we go at Easter and Autumn, the gentle times of the year. We never go mid-winter, and you forget just how cold it is then and how hard it must be for those people who live in that environment. You can't avoid all the agriculture and see the connection that the people in these remote mountain areas still have with the land, something I think the students begin to understand that we've lost.

I think the real strength of Discover is that they've got the balance right. On the one hand they have all the safety procedures in place; the back-up, the risk assessment, the quality badges, everything that would reassure parents, governors and school management. Everything they need to have is in place as good as, if not better than, many of the very big companies. Added to this is the knowledge that when you phone or email the company you're going to get a reply from people you know. I think that's the magic of Discover





because I've not come across a company to do both of those.

Scott Garrity, Associate Head, Queen Elizabeth School, Ashbourne, Derbyshire

I took the first trip to Morocco in 2003 with Discover. I'd seen their advert in one of the geographical magazines and I was looking for a more challenging trip than the Wales field trips that the students were used to. I saw Morocco as culturally different. I wanted to introduce the students to a new country, a range of environments, a range of people as well because the Berber of the mountains are quite different from the people in Zagora and the people of Marrakech.

Quite quickly we realised the enrichment side, learning through experience, was more important than the field work. We wanted the trip to be more about the subtlety of development dilemmas, the disparity between rich and poor, rural and urban, we wanted it to be about the changing environment, and we wanted to do that through their experience and observations.

During our stay at the Kasbah we always do an overnight camp in a mountain village, seeing how the people live purely through agriculture, subsistence living. When we're walking through the villages and the kids come out to high-five the students, for many of them on both sides I suppose that's the first engagement they've had with a different culture.

The students are more worldly-wise and politically aware these days than they probably ever have been because the news and social media makes them more aware. The group we took in Spring 2015 were really surprised and pleased to see that some of the news stories that they had been seeing weren't that evident in Morocco, particularly in the mountains and desert. I think they expected some type of tension and maybe a presence that would make it a heightened state of alert, but that wasn't noticeable at all.

We found from the first trip that the confidence in the engagement and learning of all the students increased in all of their subjects. It wasn't just in geography. When they came back to school we found that they came back with a clearer sense of what they wanted to achieve and how they would engage in examinations and the learning process and their next step beyond school.

An important aspect of Discover is that their staff go to the places you go to. It's that local knowledge. Other companies provide good tours and good expeditions but I don't think I can find any other company that's got the knowledge and the insight and also the adaptability that Discover have. It's the staff at Discover that make it a re-bookable experience.

(Click on Discover Morocco image to view video)



**A video for schools, colleges and universities
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In Association With



MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE

MARRAKECH TO OUKAÏMEDEN

CHARITY BIKE RIDE - SUNDAY APRIL 24 2016

The fourth Marrakech Atlas Etape is almost upon us and it looks like a record turn-out, no doubt helped by *The Telegraph* naming it one of the top six cylosportives of 2015. Starting from the exotic city of Marrakech the full ascent to the ski resort of Oukaïmeden will challenge the serious amateur or professional, but there are several routes to suit all abilities: 140 km, 104 km, 84 km and 60 km. Don't miss this chance to take part in a world-class ride under the blue Moroccan skies. 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!

I really can not recommend this event enough-truly exceptional.
James Tuffs

The Marrakesh Atlas Etape is a true cycle-sportive catering for all

Nigel Hale-Hunter
BPM Cycling Coach

Would I go back and ride the Marrakech Atlas Etape again? 100%. A great event, super-friendly and extremely well organized.

Matt Brett
road.cc



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OUT



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Argan Xtreme Sports, one of the founders of
Marrakech Atlas Etape

offer extended stays of 3, 4 and 7 days to experience the best of cycling in the High Atlas Mountains.

Contact info@argansports.com for further information



Close Encounters

Relationships are based on understanding and appreciating differences; cultural, personal, societal. It's how bonds are made.

Kasbah du Toubkal offers a unique opportunity to experience Moroccan culture

Over the past ten years Education For All has grown from a single boarding house with ten shy girls from remote mountain villages to an extended 'family' of 186 living in five homes-away-from-home, with eighteen more continuing their studies at Marrakech University. The story of EFA is told in *A Different Life*, but the full story extends far beyond the seemingly simple idea of giving an opportunity to someone who would otherwise never experience a life other than that of a small mountain village.

Kasbah du Toubkal has been hosting school field-work trips for over twenty years. In fact that was its raison d'être when it was bought by Discover Ltd as little more than a wooden door and three crumbling walls. The format of the trips began to change as teachers realised that this was more than simply an opportunity to study rivers, mountains, flora and fauna, it was a chance to observe daily life of a culture far removed from their own. Equally important was that students began to see the world through eyes other than a TV or computer screen – their own, and were able to make judgments based on personal experience and not that of an editor.

Andy Phillips, a Trustee of Education For All with more than thirty years experience as an education advisor and school inspector, began taking small groups of school leaders on a brief study tour of their own in 2012. 'The whole thing about a visit to Morocco is that it is the experience of being here that is the greatest influence, and that's difficult to express simply in words to teachers who had shown interest in visiting Marrakech and the Kasbah but had never been before. As someone who has had a lifetime's involvement in education, it's very rewarding to see the affect even a three-day visit can have on people,'

It was from these visits that the idea came of offering the opportunity of a short cultural introduction to Morocco to a broader range of clients, more specifically those who had shown interest in the lives of the girls under Education For All's care.

For three days visitors are introduced to the culture and society of Morocco, through escorted tours of the vibrant city of Marrakech and the tranquil rural society of the Imlil Valley, with the opportunity to see at first hand the work of Education For All, including visiting some of the boarding houses, sharing a glass of mint tea with the girls and housemothers and hearing at first hand from the girls themselves how their lives have changed thanks to the work of EFA

Both Andy Phillips and Mike McHugo, who will be co-hosting the tours, are quite clear about their reasoning when they talk about the proposed programme, to take place later this year and early 2017.

'Our only criteria for this is that it benefits the girls with Education For All,' says Andy. 'But we're not just looking for hand-outs. What we hope is that by seeing Marrakech and the Imlil Valley through a different set of eyes than simply as a tourist, and visiting the boarding houses to chat with the girls, visitors will gain a greater understanding of the impact that education has on the lives of everyone involved with EFA.' 'Although hand-outs are always gratefully received,' he adds with a grin.

To learn more about the new cultural awareness short breaks please contact Andy or Mike McHugo directly at
andy@apa-ec.co.uk mike@discover.ltd.uk



Location, location, location

Lucy Goodman is a regular visitor to Morocco, usually travelling alone. In her own words she tells why she feels safer there than anywhere else.

I can honestly say that I've never felt safer and more relaxed as a lone, female, traveller, anywhere than I do in Morocco, a wondrous and most tranquil country. I suppose my positive previous experiences and familiarity with the country's geography, transport, economy and culture adds significantly to my peace of mind. And, if I get stuck I know that there will always be someone who takes great genuine pleasure in helping me out, without financial incentive.

Whether travelling alone or with a group, the most precarious thing we do is the travelling itself. Transport is the only thing I might worry about in Morocco, i.e. whether there will be any, if it will turn up and leave anywhere near the expected times, how many people will be squeezed in to the taxi, minibus, or truck and will it actually make it to the destination due to the age and strain on the vehicles. For me this also the essence of Morocco, and if you are to experience the country as a native then you deal with and enjoy the same challenges as they face.

During my time in Morocco an avalanche killed two students in the French Alps, which made me think about the risks people choose to take and our judgment of what is an acceptable risk and what is an unacceptable one. But by trying to avoid something that we can't predict or control ourselves, like terrorism, we aren't actually avoiding anything, only postponing our



lives in the hope that we will get another 'safer' opportunity in future. This is not to say that no-where is safe, but rather everywhere is.

Fortunately I have a spectrum of Moroccan friends, Arabs and Berbers, living in cities and in the remotest High Atlas mountain settlements, whom, when I speak to about this question of security, are almost offended that I've even mentioned the conceivability of feeling at risk anywhere within the Kingdom. I think this is a key point. Moroccans are such a generous and friendly people, so used to sharing, and so pleased to greet one another, that they can't bare the thought of anyone setting out to deliberately hurt someone else, and especially not in the name of religion.

I did not want to focus on the perceived risk of terrorism in Morocco, but it seems to be only a matter of location - that it finds itself in the Maghreb region of North Africa - and it's prevailing religion, that lead to its hypothetical insecurity. If the residents of Morocco are not worried for their safety- need anyone else be? I hastened to reiterate that there is nowhere that I feel safer or more at peace than in Morocco; I love it, stand in solidarity with the people, look forward to returning, and encourage others to discover the country too.



Morocco in the Media



You may think you know **Marrakech** but you will never have seen it like this before. Resurrected from the archives of **Pathe Pictures** you see life in the Red City in the more tranquil times of almost seven decades ago.



tripadvisor reviewers voted-Marrakech as the new Travellers' Choice Number One Destination in the world.



Moments in Morocco video:
The title says it all



C'est officiel: **Marrakech** es la ville la plus attrayanta au monde



A personal view of
Kasbah du Toubkal



Morocco is the **only safe country** in North Africa: French Foreign Ministry



British film director **Sir Ridley Scott** would go back to Morocco 'in a flash'



Morocco to switch on first phase of world's largest solar plant

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MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE

MARRAKECH TO OUKAÏMEDEN

CHARITY BIKE RIDE - SUNDAY APRIL 24 2016

Register online at
www.marrakech-atlas-etape.com

Click [HERE](#) to follow us on Instagram. If you have any photographs you'd like to share of your stay with us, please tag them with @kasbahdutoubkal. We'd be delighted to share them on our page.



Keep up to date with our glorious corner of Morocco... Click on the logo to receive future issues of the Kasbah du Toubkal's quarterly magazine.

www.kasbahdutoubkal.com kasbah@discover.ltd.uk