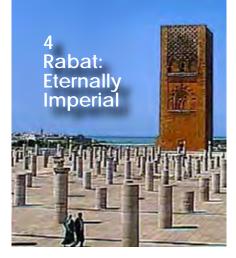
KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

MOROCCO'S PREMIER MOUNTAIN RETREAT



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Kasbah du Toubkal are pleased to be founder members of National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World



National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World is a collection of handpicked lodges that invite guests to experience the world's most treasured places while helping to protect them for generations to come. Each lodge has made the choice to tread lightly, to celebrate nature rather than conquer it, to support cultural heritage, and to engage with local communities. From remarkable architecture to fine cuisine, these lodges are inspired by and complement their surroundings. The experience they offer is intimate and extraordinary, connecting guests with their destination in an authentic and meaningful way.





Almost djellaba time

It's still warm on the plains of Marrakech but the nights are getting longer in the villages of the Imlil Valley. The perfect time for trekking; warm days for walking give way to cool evenings for a steamy hammam to relax the bones before stoking up on a hearty tajine by candlelight.

With this issue, our eighth, we celebrate two years of the Kasbah du Toubkal magazine, but we haven't just been resting on our laurels during the three months it takes to produce each issue. We've spent the time updating our two popular booklets, Reasonable Plans, the story of the Kasbah, and A Different Life, outlining the work of Education for All; creating detailed brochures and leaflets for specialist groups such as the schools, colleges and universities who value the Kasbah and its French sister, The Eagle's Nest, for their diverse flora, fauna and cultural experiences; documents to raise corporate funding for EFA; individual leaflets for courses, especially the very popular yoga groups who return regularly to our Berber Hospitality centre, and more recently a biannual magazine specifically for travel agents to show that the Kasbah is far more than

just a delightful room with a beautiful view. We've also been building new websites and working with other organisations to bring you the story of the Imlil valley, both online and as a downloadable PDF. With Discover Ltd, our travel agency arm, we've created a series of new programmes to let you truly discover the glory and beauty of Morocco, either with our suggested itineraries or as a 'build your own adventure' which allows you to choose what you want to do and when you want to do it. You can find out about all of these in the following pages.

As ever, I look forward to hearing from you at

kasbahmagazine@gmail.com.

Derek Workman

Editor

...and everyone at

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL



lean on a wall at Café Maure in Rabat's 12th century, Kasbah de Oudaïas, looking across the river to Salé, Rabat's smaller twin which took its name from the piratical Sallee Rovers who terrorised the Atlantic shores as far as the south coast of England.

Other than Bab Oudaïas, the main gate with its ornate decoration, that was originally a courthouse and staterooms, the village within the

walls is a slow meander of boxy low-level blue and white houses, dead-ends and wiggly alleyways. You don't go to the Kasbah to be enthralled by its historic delights, but it is a glimpse of everyday life as it has been lived for centuries.

I work my way downhill, my destination the Andalusian Gardens at the bottom of Rue Bazo, filled with the yellow of marigolds, pink of oleander, deep red ros-

es, drooping white angel's trumpets, yellow and white Michaelmas daisies, all shown off against a background of a myriad shades of green and purple leaves. The gardens were once the grounds of a palace of the infamous Sultan Moulay Ismail of Meknes, and these days host exhibitions of traditional musical instruments, clothing, jewellery and clothing.

I leave the Kasbah Oudaïas and wander down Rue des Consuls, once the diplomats' quarter, and through the medina. Unlike many Moroccan cities, much of this ancient part of the city is quiet residential streets with a few hole-in-the wall workshops catering to the everyday needs of the neighbourhood. I particularly like the grand doorways, with their stone carved decoration above and around their heavy studded doors, not seen much elsewhere.

Eventually I come to Rue Souika. If you want to see daily life from a Moroccan perspective, without the frills of babouche and kaftan sellers, this is the place to be. Other than in the early evening when it seems that the world and his

brother are out doing business, Rue Souika is ideal; no hastle or hustle but plenty of street bustle.

I buy a *beghrir* from a lady with a portable hotplate. These soft and delicious pancakes are made from a batter of semolina flour that creates hundreds of bubbles that burst as the beghrir is cooked. But it takes a deft hand to get the consistency of the batter just right; too thick and the bubbles can't

form. While I wait for mine to be cooked I watch a man in a TV repair shop who also seems to have a pretty profitable sideline in sunglasses - a typically Moroccan commercial attitude.

At the bottom of Rue Souika, in the Marche Central everything is brightness and colour. Ignore the 'worn at the edges' appearance and delight in the mix of products you could put in your shopping basket. Gaudy bunches of fresh flowers (with dried ones dangling from the ceiling), piles of vividly green fresh mint, dangles of entrails and chunks of meat you'd rather not know the origin of, Technicolor vegetable stalls, mounds of glistening olives and dusky dates, but



for me, the highlight of the gastronomic show is the fish section. You may never have thought of a display of fish as being a photo opportunity, but the care with which they are laid out makes them look as beautiful as any display of colourful leather slippers.

I watch a group of fishmongers rapidly cleaning large fish before wrapping them in paper and handing them to a young boy, who carefully places them in a battered old ice-packed coolbox strapped to the pannier of his bicycle. I envy the client they will be delivered to, imagining what I could do with such superb fresh ingredients.

I hop in a petit taxi to take me to the Mausoleum of Mohammed V and the Le Tour Hassan. The Hassan Tower is awesome. Construction began in 1195 under the orders of sultan Almohad Yacoub el Mansour but was abandoned on his death only four years later. It's difficult to perceive that had he completed his dream it would have been half as tall again, a towering 60 metres, one of the highest minarets in the world. The Koutoubia in Marrakech is almost twice the height of this unfinished tower, and a magnificent structure in its own right, but this truncated version of one man's vision, left as it was on the day of his death, has an element of poignancy, with the jagged edges of unfinished decorative stonework and the weeds that grow between them.

The stunted pillars are all that is left of the mosque, destroyed by the same earthquake on 1st November, 1755, All Saints' Day in the Christian calendar (the aptly named 'Day of the

Dead), that virtually obliterated Lisbon. Reports estimate that between 40-50,000 people in Portugal, Spain and Morocco died in one of the deadliest earthquakes in history, 10,000 of them in North Africa.

In the mausoleum, one of the most important shrines in Morocco and one of the few open to non-Muslims, are the tombs of King Mohammed V and his two sons King Hassan II and Prince Moulay Abdellah. An imam dressed in white robe and tasselled fez recites the Koran, while in the corners of the viewing balcony green-robed Royal Guards stand motionless in what must surely be one of the least loved of their postings. At each of the four entrances a red robed guard stands, who, like the horse guards at the entrance to the courtyard, is amenable to having photos taken. Ask, and they assume a guard-like pose. The guard who poses for my photo shows great restraint because as soon as the photo is taken he explodes into a coughing fit. I'm just in time to catch the changing of the horse guards. Two guards with horses in green and gold livery slowly ride across the square, and in a few well practiced moves take their place in front of the gate. A matched pair of brown steeds replace a matched pair of white. The guards salute each other before the relieved pair return from whence their comrades came. I take pity on the water seller who has been standing by the gate and who is being totally ignored by everyone, despite his highly polished bowls. Ten dirhams cheers him up and is worth the pose for a photograph.







The Many Faces of VOCCCO

Kasbah du Toubkal has a well-deserved reputation for its trekking holidays, whether it's a half-day stroll in the foothills of Jbel Toubkal, two or three days to its summit, or a longer trek taking in the beauty of the High Atlas Mountains. But what many visitors to the beautiful Berber Hospitality Centre don't know is that Discover Ltd, the British owners of the Kasbah, also offer a range of tours throughout the glorious kingdom of Morocco, both as pre-arranged packages and as customised, 'build your own' tours. Below are a small selection you can either enjoy as designed or use as the basis for creating your own Moroccan experience of a lifetime.

Marrakech and the Atlantic coast

Explore with US the ancient city of Marrakech and then take time out to enjoy the relaxed and spectacular Atlantic coast. We will visit the charming town of Oualidia, renowned for its oysters and its natural lagoon, and continue on to the picturesque fortified town of Essaouira with its lively fishing port and medina (old quarter), before making the return journey to Marrakech.





Marrakech, mountains, and desert

Visit the ancient city of Marrakech and Berber villages nestled deep within the High Atlas Mountains. Traverse the highest mountain pass in Morocco, descending to the magnificent Ksar of Aït Benhaddou. Continue to the beautiful sand dunes of Erg Chebbi and experience the pleasure of camping in style, before returning to Marrakech via the oasis town of Skoura.

In and Around Marrakech

A short tour of Morocco encompassing some vastly different aspects of this visually stunning country. We explore the ancient city of Marrakech and visit Berber villages tucked away in the High Atlas Mountains and spend a night in the Agafay Desert, enjoying a candlelit dinner under the stars, before making the return journey to Marrakech.



A cultural tour of Morocco

Discover the imperial cities of Morocco: Marrakech, a vibrant and exciting city with much to offer the visitor; Rabat, the historical and political capital city of Morocco; Fes, the cultural and spiritual heart of the country; Meknes, the gentle-paced city of minarets. All transfers during the tour will be in a private chauffeur-driven car. Guides in Marrakech, Rabat and Fes are also included.





Morocco in Style

Mountains, desert and historic cities. You begin your tour with a two-night stay in the acclaimed Relais et Chateaux Villa des Orangiers in Marrakech. Onward into the High Atlas and Kasbah du Toukal, thence to the desert town of Skoura and a chance to see the fabulous Dades Gorge. Fez and a tour of the mysterious Medina; Rabat, the country's capital, and return to Marrakech. A tour that shows all sides of this enigmatic country at its best.

Azzaden Trekking Lodge

It's six in the evening, the time of the paseo, and I sit on a rock on the edge of Aït Aïssa, a mud-brick village clinging to the hillside, the next but last in the Azzaden Valley before the road comes to a dead end at Tizi Oussem. One way in, one way out. Much of the vegetables sold in local markets are grown here; potatoes, onions, cherries, apples, some of which will appear in the meal I'll be eating at the trekking lodge, a mini version of the Berber comfort of Kasbah du Toubkal. Behind me is a five-hour trek from the Kasbah, during which my guide, Abdeslam Maachou, a young man who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area despite his age, has kept me entertained and informed. On our climb we were accompanied by the



insistent clatter of cicadas that retreated into a stony silence as we approached. The air was so crystal clear that I felt as if I could touch the other side of the valley. Tomorrow we return to the Kasbah over Tizi Oudid, but before that I have the pleasure of a chicken tajine to look forward to and a night of silence and twinkling stars.

Build your own holiday

The holidays above are just a few examples of those offered by Discover Limited.

To create your own, personalised Moroccan Experience please contact

Michael Logan • Email: michael.logan@discover.ltd.uk • Tel +44 (0)1379 678 912

Thursday's Child

A stroll around Bab el Khermís

f the twelve gates in the 12 km-long, rose-pink 12th-century wall that wraps around the ancient city, Bab el Khemis is one of the oldest. It takes its name from the Thursday market where once camels, horses, mules and asses were sold, and, at least according to Arthur Leared, who travelled the country in 1872, "On the sale of each animal a guarantee that it has not been stolen, verified by a notary, is required". How anyone could guarantee the provenance of a rag-tag assembly of worn out critters, (and you could probably use the same term for the dealers), many of which had walked hundreds of kilometres across sand and mountain to end up as camel meat on the tables in the open-air restaurants of the Jmaa el Fnaa, remains a mystery.

It's Thursday, and as the Thursday market has been on my 'must-do' list for ages I saunter off to see what somewhere that has been described as 'one of world's greatest mixes of junk and treasures' has to offer on this fine day. I'm secretly hoping that I might find a decent second-hand Brooks bike saddle at a bargain price, as I do at every flea-market I go to. I haven't as yet, but it doesn't stop me secretly hoping. I stroll in through an archway that draws me into a clattering, banging, screeching, grinding, shower-of-sparks-flying pandemonium. But it's only pandemonium to my ears and eyes; to everyone else it's just the daily noise of the metal-workers souk. Scattered everywhere are large sheets of metal, long strips of steel two fingers wide, pencil-thin rolled rods that are bent and twisted to create intricate designs. Sparks shoot from angle grinders like spinning Catherine wheels as young men with no protection other than a pair of sunglasses and a cloth wrapped around their face – and sometimes neither of those – cut, burnish and smooth. Everything is covered by a fine black powder, but this is Morocco, and the dusty monotone is alleviated by the brightly coloured djellabas of passers-by.







Turning away from the street of the metal workers I wander down a cluttered alleyway of wonderful ancient doors, rolls of antique rugs, Lloydloom chairs, exquisitely painted tables, worn and patinated with age, a 50s pram, plastic garden recliners – and yes, I do even see the kitchen sink, as well as one for the bathroom, along with its bath, toilet and bidet, all in the chunky cut-corner style of art deco. I also pass men and women squatting on the ground behind a pile of odds and ends that can have no conceivable value other than to someone who has nothing of value at all; a Kodak cartridge camera, a pair of



stiletto-heeled shoes with one stiletto, an alarm clock with no hands, odd socks, seven-year old magazines in Spanish – the same detritus you see on every flea-market in the world.

I hear the Koran being sung, the beautiful a cappella coming from a tinny-sounding loudspeaker hung outside a café at an alley junction bustling with second-hand clothes vendors. Anticipating a hot coffee, the sound draws me towards a table like the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer. Parking myself in one of those plastic garden chairs that succumb to too much time in the sun and bend when you lean backwards, I wave at a passing waiter and ask for a café au lait. It could well be my accent, or he may not speak French, but he casts a bemused look around the other clients, obviously not having understood any of the three words I've just spoken.

"Mint tea," a voice says in English, but I've no idea which table it came from. Obviously coffee's off the menu.

"Bien," I say, and the waiter goes off to get it. He comes back a couple of minutes later with a glass of something that looks as if it has been sitting around for a while, probably at the bottom of a u-bend of a kitchen sink. I reach into my pocket for some money.

"One dirham," a different voice says.

"One dirham!" I think, cheap in any currency. I hand the coin over – never look a gift glass in the mouth

"A mange?" asks the chap with the grey stubble and wool bobble hat at the next table. They may not be big conversationalists, but they all helpfully want to get in on the act.

As I continue my walk through the furniture souk, I pass a young lad in his teens carving

intricate scroll work in the top of a small table. His curved chisels are almost worn to nothing from generations of grinding and sharpening. He uses a squared-off length of wood with one end roughly rounded as a handle as he carefully taps the chisel, turning his hand slowly to create a curve in the scroll, all the while chatting to his friend who's busy planeing the sixty degree angle of one of the joints that will form the traditional hexagonal table.

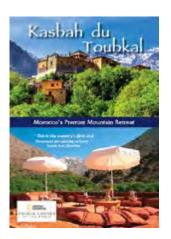
In the wider alleyways you can hear the rattling sounds of mopeds and small vans long enough ahead in time to get out of the way and let them pass. It's not the same with the donkeys and carts, though. The carts usually have rubber tyres, although nine times out of ten, worn down to the webbing, and the donkeys don't exactly make the coconut clacking sound of horses galloping, given their docility and sedate pace. The first thing you know you are stopping someone in pursuance of their livelihood is when you hear someone shouting, "Balec, balec!" which guide books will tell you means, "Make way, make way," but is usually said in a tone that more realistically says, "Oi, you, shift yourself!" I turn around to meet the doleful stare of a donkey looking at the design on my T-shirt, not that it's really interested in knowing that I 'heart' Agadir, but because that's how tall he is, and frankly, he doesn't care whether I move or

I find myself back at the door I came into the souk by, more by chance than design. I didn't find my Brooks saddle but tomorrow is another day as they say, or as far as the Bab Khermis flea-market is concerned, next Thursday is.

The Kasbah Library

ulti-award winning Kasbah du Toubkal has an enviable reputation as a hotel with a solid grounding in the ecology and the economy of the local Berber community of the seven villages that make up the Imlil Valley. But the idea that it is simply a stunning mountain-top hotel with beautiful bedrooms does not do justice to what the Berber Hospitality Centre offers. Expert guides and top-quality equipment provide some of the best trekking in North Africa; school groups forge friendships with the local community whilst developing their own interpersonal skills while engaged in educational research; high-level corporate training organisations appreciate the total contrast of mountain village ambience as compared to five-star city multi-star; yoga, painting and personal development groups love the tranquillity of the Kasbah.

We try to cater for every need at Kasbah du Toubkal, and below are some of the booklets, leaflets and documents we create to keep our clients informed.



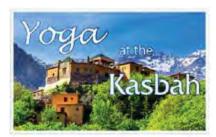
An introduction to Kasbah du Toubkal, this is the leaflet we send to future clients making an enquiry about the hotel and hand out at travel shows etc. Its few pages give an excellent outline of the Kasbah but equal value can be found in the many links to downloadable pdfs found in the leaflet. An excellent first exploratory stop on a trip to the High Atlas Mountains.



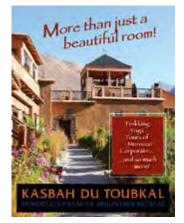


an insight into the substantial benefits that these travel experiences bring to students.

Click on any cover image for more information



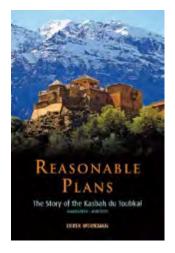
One of the most popular activities at the Kasbah, independent trainers regularly offer courses at all levels, encouraged by the open spaces, hospitality of the Berber people and tranquil ambience.



Travel agents play a very important role in introducing new clients to Kasbah du Toubkal but unfortunately they aren't always aware that we offer far more than just a 'beautiful room'. The latest addition to our library is the

first issue of a bi-annual magazine incorporating material from our more detailed quarterly version to introduce agents to the diverse programme we offer at the our mountain-top eyrie in the High Atlas.

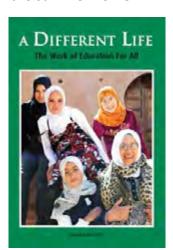
Our first publications



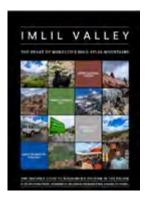
Reasonable Plans takes its name from a brass plaque fixed on the arched wooden double doors that welcome you Kasbah du Toubkal – 'Dreams Are Only The Plans Of The Reasonable'. This is the story of the Kasbah, from its days when there was little left of the summer home

of a local feudal baron to the award-winning Berber hospitality centre that you enjoy today.

Education For All has been at the forefront of the Kasbah's support for the local community from the moment we introduced our policy of adding five per cent to each guest's bill. A Different Life describes how EFA began with a small group of twelve shy young girls taking their places in the first boarding house in Asni and the adventure that lay before them.



and our latest



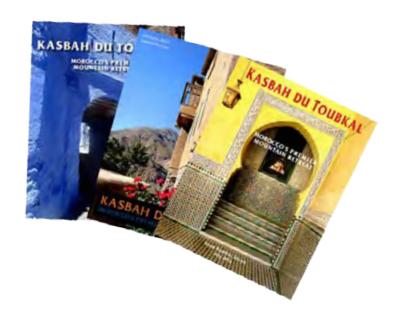
If there were no Imlil Valley there would most likely be no Kasbah du Toubkal and while the Kasbah itself receives worldwide publicity relatively little is known about the villages, the people and the culture of this small area of the High Atlas Mountains. In Imlil Valley – The Heart of Morocco's High Atlas Mountains you will learn about the lives of the Berber people who live there and how you can contribute in a meaningful way to ensuring that this beautiful area continues to thrive and maintain its unique cultural identity.

and don't forget

you can have the Kasbah du Toubkal magazine drop through your digital postbox every quarter by clicking

HERE

For back issues click on the magazines





"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 in the early morning beneath a humbling blanket of stars"*

Trevor Rowell

n April of this year Trevor Rowell and Mike McHugo cycled the backroads of the High Atlas Mountains, recapturing the adventure of their youth. They were surprised at how little had changed in some places and thought it would be a wonderful idea to introduce others to the Morocco they had discovered thirty years ago, but in a way that would benefit the Moroccan youth of today, more specifically the young girls of Education For All.

Route 666 is a five-day ride through the backwaters and stunning scenery of the High Atlas Mountains, often taking roads totally unused by any tourists. A genuine Moroccan adventure but fully supported by the Kasbah du Toubkal team. The ride takes place immediately after the Marrakech Atlas Etape and offers a unique opportunity to help secure the future of the girls of Education For All and discover cycling at its best in Morocco.



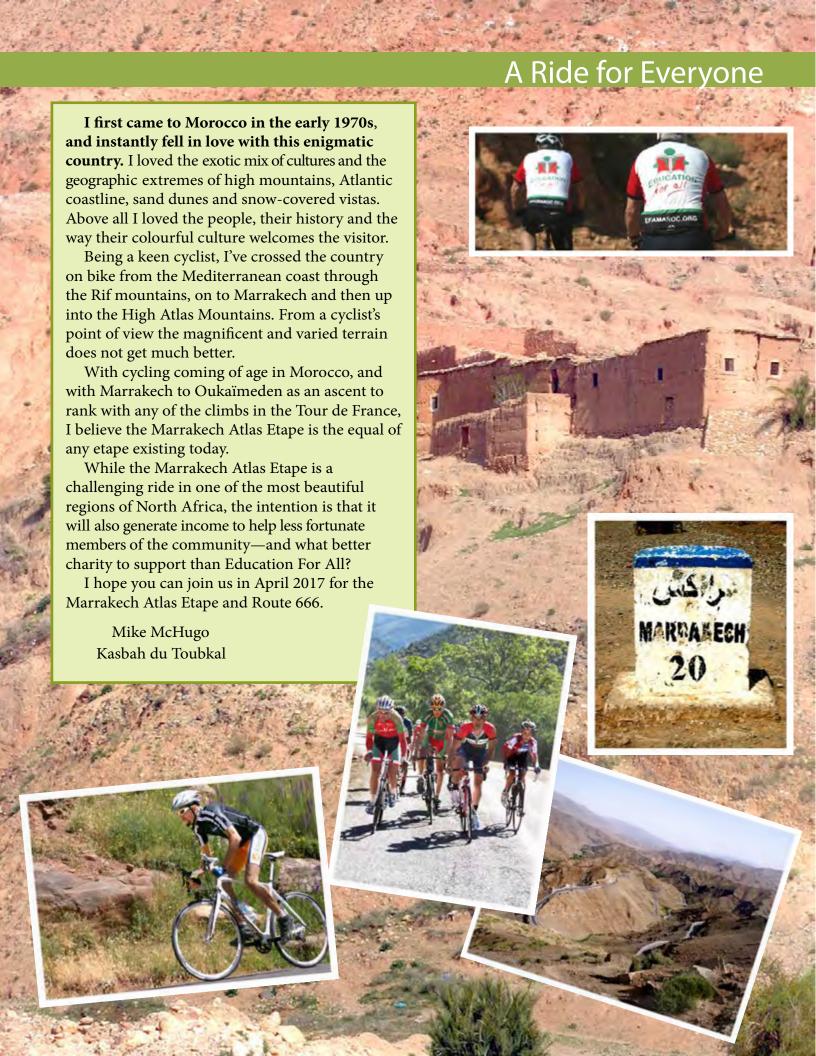


A MOROCCAN CYCLING ADVENTURE APRIL 29 – 6 MAY 2017

In support of

for all MOROCCO

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Planning for the next decade

In 2017 Education For All celebrates its tenth anniversary and Marrakech Atlas Etape its fifth. A new plan is in progress to provide for even more girls from rural Morocco to gain a secondary education

James Tuffs has become a legend in the short life of the Marrakech Atlas Etape mainly because of his insistence on riding a three-geared, around-town Brompton with wheels the size of dinner plates up the staggering slope to Oukaimeden for the first three events. His fourth Etape was on a tandem - a small wheeled Circe Helios Duo folding tandem – with Henry Creagh as stoker. With nearly 100 hundred years and 32 stone between them, the achievement may have gone to their heads, and when it was later let slip that they worked for a relatively successful marketing agency called R/GA and that they may be willing to help with Education For All, it was the offer Mike McHugo (who came up with the idea for the étape with his friend Gareth Westacott as a way to combine his love for cycling with raising funds for the charity he founded) had been waiting for.

The ambition is high. 2017 is the tenth birthday of the charity and the fifth Etape and the aim is for the Marrakech Atlas Etape and its associated activities to

completely fund the longterm growth of Education For All, a lofty goal taken in small manageable steps.

The initial focus is to increase the number of participants taking part in the ride and look at ways to encourage them to raise more money in support of EFA. In addition to this EFA/MAE are actively chasing a new patron; looking for sponsors in addition to Kasbah du Toubkal and Argan Xtreme Sports who will be jointly sponsoring the logistics for the fifth year; aiming to name some celebrity participants as well as attracting wider participation from cycling clubs.

The first step is to open the 'early bird' registration for 2017 where you can either join the EFA team with a commitment to raise £400 for the charity or buy a place to 'just ride' at a discount rate offered to all those who sign up before November. After that the promotional plan currently being designed kicks in and, with a fair wind, it all comes together, creating a great event and enabling far more girls from rural Morocco to have a secondary education.

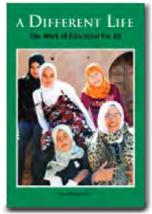
CONGRATULATIONS to the 12 girls who have passed their baccalaureate (A Level equivalent)! That means 8 are university-bound and 4 will go on to vocational college. Everyone of you who has supported EFA is part of this amazing success, which is changing lives for generations to come.

THANK YOU!

If you are interested in volunteering to assist Go HERE to download the lastest the girls of Education for All in Morocco, please contact

info@efamorocco.org

copy of the **Education For All Newsletter**



Click on the cover to read the full story of **Education For All**

Morocco in the Media



Projects Aim to Make Marrakech World Tourism Destination



Best hikes in the world: Mount Toubkal, Morocco



Morocco Among Safest Countries Worldwide: British Foreign Office





Cass Travels - to Kabah du Toubkal



In Morocco's Atlas mountains, Berber girls find the way out of rural poverty: an education



An interview with Mike McHugo

Kasbah du Toubkal on

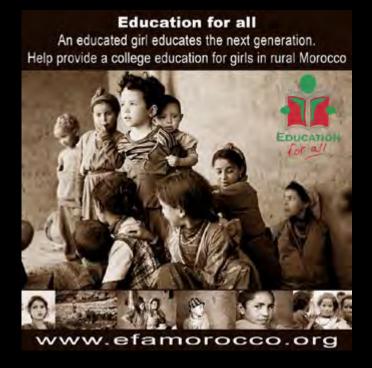


Instagram

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.





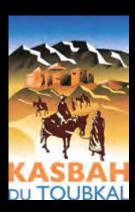
MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE

MARRAKECH TO OUKAÏMEDEN

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN APRIL 2017

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.