



MOROCCO

OURIKA VALLEY

TREK

7-11 OCT '27

INFORMATION PACK



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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Ourika Valley is located to the southeast of Marrakech, positioned in the foothills of the snow-covered Western High Atlas Mountains. This captivating area of Morocco provides opportunities for mountain hiking, the exploration of distinctive Berber villages, and even winter snow skiing.

The distance from Marrakech to the Ourika Valley varies between 30 to 40km, so we have a short transfer to the start of roughly between 40 to 50 minutes. Despite being close to Marrakech, it remains a relatively well-preserved valley, inherently maintaining the traditional mountain lifestyle.

A FEW FACTS AND FIGURES

Full country name: Kingdom of Morocco.

Area: 710,850 sq. km (including W Sahara).

Population: 38.3 million (2025).

Capital city: Rabat.

People: 55% Arab, 44% Berber, 0.7% foreigners.

Languages: Arabic (officially) with Berber dialects, as well as French, Spanish and English.

Religion: 98% Islam, 1% Christian, 1% Jewish.

Government: Constitutional monarchy.

King: King Mohammed VI.

Prime Minister: Aziz Akhannouch.

Time: GMT +1 in October.



2. TRAINING

This trek requires a **great level of physical fitness**. The terrain and length of time you spend walking and extremes of temperatures could present a **tough, physical, and mental challenge**. The amount of training you will require depends on your current overall fitness levels. We recommend **consulting your GP before embarking on any new, strenuous training campaign**, plus enlisting the support and expertise of a personal trainer if you train at a gym (if only initially to set you on the right track).

Remember that personal commitments can play havoc with a training routine, so **prepare well and in plenty of time**, so a few missed sessions won't matter. Outdoor training is always best, but our training guide also incorporates indoor and gym work as we realise it's not always possible to trek outdoors.

Start slowly and gradually build up both the time you train and your intensity levels. **As your fitness improves, you can begin to wear a backpack walking for some workouts, gradually adding weight to a maximum 10kgs.** You shouldn't carry this weight each time you train as you'll put too much strain on your joints! Remember that although you need to get used to the weight, you'll be carrying on the trek, you'll be able to train longer, more effectively and safely if you carry a lighter pack. Stretching routines as you warm up/cool down are recommended, to help prevent or reduce injury and to increase your flexibility and agility.

Your training programme should focus on three main areas:

SPORT SPECIFIC TRAINING

This is the key to a successful trek! We mean hill climbing outdoors, eventually wearing the pack you'll be carrying on the trek in mountains. Again, this should be built up slowly, increasing the time you trek and the difficulty of the terrain you cover. Warming up gradually for each session is always a good plan.

Gradually add weight to your backpack as your fitness levels improve or increase the incline. To avoid excess pressure and stress on your knees, it is a good idea to train with water filled bottles that can be emptied before any descent.

If you live in a flat area, then **it is essential you travel to hillier areas to train effectively.** Prior to departure you should organise several training weekends involving **at least 2-3 days of continuous trekking over steep and uneven mountain terrain,** to build up your fitness, strength, and confidence. Gaining experience walking on snow and scree (loose stones and boulders) will be an asset. The more comfortable you feel trekking and scrambling outdoors, wearing your backpack and other gear, the more comfortable and agile you'll be on the trek, and so you'll expend less energy.

DEVELOPING YOUR STAMINA

This will help build up your general cardiovascular endurance. To help build stamina, try to vary your routines by alternating sessions of interval training with continuous training. You should also try different activities, such as running, walking, walking up and down stairs, and working on an elliptical cross trainer or hill climber. Training using movements as close to the climbing and trekking you will be doing on the trek is best. This way you'll use your muscles in the same way. As your strength builds, these activities will also allow you to wear a backpack while training (never run with your pack on).

If you are a runner and can do a 10k park run and/or have experience of multi day walks on mountainous terrain with ascent of 1000+ meters on more than one consecutive day, you should be in good shape for this challenge.



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For muscle balance, and to avoid boredom, you may also like to incorporate non sport specific activities, such as swimming or rowing. If your training programme is tight however, or you must drop a session, these are the activities to lose first.

WEIGHT TRAINING/RESISTANCE TRAINING

This should increase power, strength and muscular endurance in your lower back, shoulders, legs, and core. Resistance training can also reduce the risk of injury as your muscles act as balancing agents throughout your body. You don't need a heavy weights programme at the gym – you can also build strength through your existing stamina and outdoors training programme and by wearing your backpack.

Training several times wearing 2lb ankle weights (not while running) can help condition you for the extra weight of your backpack and long hours trekking.

TREK GRADE

The area is a known trekking destination and the trails are well-marked. The trek is not technically difficult, but you will encounter a variety of terrain, some rocky steps, ascents, and descents. Overall, this trek is moderate to tough especially without prior training so you should be physically fit and prepared for the rigours of trekking for long hours.

3. TYPICAL DAY

While camping we will be up early. We will be woken with a cup of mint tea/coffee and bowls of washing water will be available. After an early breakfast in a mess tent we will start walking. In the evenings, firstly we will have a mint tea and rest, followed by dinner served in a mess tent.

After dinner we will have a briefing about the next day's trek.

4. ALTITUDE

The air gets thinner the higher you go so there becomes a shortage of oxygen. The effects of altitude can be felt from around 2,500m upwards. The highest point of the trek is 2,600m.

Our guides are very experienced at knowing when someone has had enough, or when they just need a bit of extra motivation. Should anyone show signs of fatigue etc. they will have to follow the guides instructions.

5. SUPPORT & BACKUP

- A member of Ultimate Challenges (UTC) will meet the group in London to distribute flight tickets and ensure that the check-in runs smoothly
- UK Doctor(s) will be accompanying the group
- Local guides will trek with the group and will be knowledgeable about the country and route
- The guides will carry mobile phones

6. HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS

You must seek professional medical advice from your GP or local travel clinic. To find out more about the relevant NHS travel health advice, a good website is <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/> You should bring you own regular medication with sufficient supplies for the whole trip and a small first aid kit (see packing checklist).

You will need to complete a detailed medical form, detailing pre-existing medical conditions and current medication. These details will be passed to the doctor accompanying the group; s/he may wish to contact you prior to the event to clarify any medical conditions or requirements.

7.SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST

People's main luggage should not be a suitcase, or a rucksack with an outside frame. The total weight will depend on the airline the group fly with, we will update you once we know this. A holdall or rucksack is the best shape for the mules to carry. It is also a good idea to wear your hiking boots on the plane, just in case any luggage goes astray on the flight out!

We can leave items not needed on trek at the hotel in Marrakech to keep the weight of our main luggage to a minimum for the horses (approx. 12kg).

EQUIPMENT

- Trekking rucksack 25-35 litre
- Plastic bags / dry bags (to keep essentials dry)
- Sunglasses (essential)
- Sleeping bag (please see below for further information)
- Water bottles - CamelBak packs, aluminium Sigg bottles or polycarbonate Nalgene bottles - enough for 2 litres minimum although some people get through 3 litres on hotter days
- Head torch and spare batteries
- Travel towel
- Walking poles -these sometimes go in the "optional" section, but we highly recommend them

CLOTHING

- Leather, or waterproofed fabric, ankle high walking/hiking boots (must be worn in) with thick soles and spare laces
- Waterproof jacket (with hood) and waterproof trousers – both items are essential and should be as light as possible (not insulated: your other layers should provide the insulation)
- 2/3 pairs of specialist trekking socks (not warm woolly socks as you will be more likely to get blisters)
- Underwear
- Trekking trousers (lightweight & quick drying)
- Trekking shorts
- Non-cotton trekking t-shirts, wicking breathable fabric x 2
- Lightweight Fleece (mid-layer)
- Warm jacket – we recommend bringing a lightweight synthetic "belay jacket" e.g. Rab Photon, Arcteryx Atom, Patagonia Nano – just in case it gets cold
- Warm hat (lightweight woolly hat is fine)
- Gloves (a lightweight pair of gloves is fine. We recommend Sealskinz waterproof gloves in case it rains)
- Sun hat/cap
- Shoes to wear in the evenings, e.g. trainers
- Thermal underwear
- Travelling clothes /celebration dinner clothes



HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Personal toiletries
- High factor sun cream (30SPF) and lip salve
- Small personal medical kit – antiseptic cream, plasters, blister treatment, knee support, pain killers, insect repellent, sting relief, diareze, Imodium, and re-hydration salts
- Bio-degradable wet wipes
- Toilet paper / nappy sacks
- Normal medication

MISCELLANEOUS

- Passport (to be carried whilst trekking – make sure you keep it dry)
- Money, for tip at the end of the trip, drinks at hotels etc.
- Isotonic drink powder or tablets (optional)
- Energy bars /chocolate / nuts or energy tablets
- Earplugs (in case of snorers!)
- Camera/batteries
- Photocopy of important documents (insurance details /passport)
- If you wear, contact lenses it is advisable to also bring your glasses
- Credit card for emergencies
- Swimming costume

Sleeping Bags

Sleeping bags are rated either by season (1, 2, 3, 3+, 4, and 4+) or comfort level (upper limit, comfort, comfort lower limit or extreme). Stores will differ to how they rate their sleeping bags. A silk liner will also aid warmth within your bag.

We would recommend the following:

- Season Level 3/3+ (winter)
- Comfort Level (lower limit for -0 °c)

Hiking boots

It's imperative that you get your walking boots well in advance of the trip to break them in and get your feet used to them. Walking boots with tough moulded soles are the best all-round solution, protecting the feet and keeping them warm and dry, providing grip and supporting the ankles, essential on steep slopes. We recommend getting your boots properly fitted at an outdoor store and advise to buy one size larger than normal.

Hiring Equipment

Anyone concerned about the costs of buying all the kit, should check out hiring some equipment from Trek Hire UK who provide good quality kit - www.trekhireuk.com

8. TRAVEL INSURANCE COVER

Please note that UTC does not provide you with any travel insurance cover.

However:

- We recommend therefore that you do take out travel insurance to make sure you are fully covered for the event you are undertaking and clarify its precise nature to your insurers by speaking with them NOT applying online
- If you choose not to take out the appropriate travel insurance, should you fall ill or be involved in an accident you will not be covered for those associated costs
- We strongly recommend you are insured for the full duration of your trip and the policy is taken out prior to the date of your departure and does not cease until you have returned
- We strongly recommend the highest levels of cover and that should include as a minimum "air evacuation, medical expenses and repatriation". Your policy should also include medical, cancellation and curtailment cover for Coronavirus (before and during departure)

- You must also make sure you inform the insurance company of any pre-existing medical conditions before travel, failure to do so may invalidate your policy or any subsequent claim
- If you have an existing policy, we highly recommend you call your insurers and confirm that it meets with the requirement of the trip you are undertaking with UTC

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to ensure that you are correctly covered for the trip (an escorted trekking tour, which should include evacuation and repatriation) and UTC take no responsibility for uninsured travel.

9. FOOD AND DRINK

All the water on trek will be bottled. Bottled water is available to buy in the hotel. People should not drink the water from the hotel (even for brushing teeth), streams or rivers.

Meals will be substantial, but it is still a good idea to bring energy bars, snacks, etc. to keep you going during the day. Breakfast will consist of fruit, cereals and/or bread, jam, cheese etc, plus mint tea, tea, and coffee. A typical lunch will be cooked vegetables, olives, eggs, cheese, and salad, plus drinks. For our evening meal there will be soup followed by a main course such as traditional meat or vegetable stew ('tajines'), with couscous and a dessert. Again, hot drinks will be served.

Vegetarians, non-dairy and gluten-free can usually be catered for but we do need to know dietary requirements in advance.

10. ACCOMMODATION (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Day 1: Hotel Marrakech

Day 2-3: Camping on trek

Day 4: Hotel Marrakech

Hotels and addresses will be confirmed nearer the time of your departure: typically, the hotel rooms are based on twin share. Whilst we are trekking, we will be sleeping in two-person tents.

We advise you tell people in the UK that you will not be contactable whilst on trek.

11. WEATHER

In general Morocco experiences hot, dry summers and mild winters. Up in the mountains however the weather can be very different from the plains. On trek we can expect fresher, cooler air than in Marrakech. The optimal trekking season is mid-June-July or September-mid October. The average temperatures in the High Atlas Mountains in October are between 17°C - 25°C. Marrakesh will be warm but the amount of time you will be in Marrakesh is minimal. Rain in the mountains is common throughout the year, but this is normally in the form of short, sharp storms, so everyone should come prepared!

12. PASSPORTS, FOREIGN OFFICE, COMMONWEALTH, DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (FCDO) AND VISAS

Passports

Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay in Morocco. However, the Moroccan Consulate General in London advise that your passport should be valid for at least 3 months on your date of entry to Morocco. If your passport does not meet this requirement you may face difficulties and you should check with the Moroccan authorities and your travel provider before travelling.

For the most up-to-date information we recommend you visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/morocco/entry-requirements

FCDO Advice

We recommend that you periodically review the travel advice issued by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, which relates to all aspects of your destination, at www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo/

Visas

Visas are not needed for UK passport holders. All other nationalities should check on the relevant embassy website.

13. MONEY

Currency: Moroccan Dirham – can only be exchanged in Morocco.

Participants should take Sterling in small denominations, which can be exchanged at the hotel with them. Visa and MasterCard are widely recognised and useful to have in emergencies.

Approximately £200 spending money is sufficient for drinks, tips, and some souvenirs.

14. THINGS TO BUY

There will be a bar at the hotel at the beginning and end of the trek. There is nothing to buy whilst we are trekking until we return to Marrakech. There is great shopping in Marrakech selling traditional Moroccan crafts e.g. rugs, silver, pottery, baskets etc.

15. TECHNOLOGY

There are no opportunities to recharge phones/cameras on trek. You are advised to bring recharge battery packs.

There is limited mobile, and no WIFI coverage whilst on trek – local SIM cards are useful to save on rooming costs. These can be picked up at the airport, or online for an E-Sim.

It is always polite to ask when taking pictures of local people.

16. TIPS AND GRATUITIES

Our local crew and guides work extremely hard on the trek. If at the end of the challenge participants would like to show their appreciation, we suggest a tip of £30.

17. FLIGHT EXTENSIONS

Anyone wanting to stay on after the trip should contact Ultimate Challenges on 020 7386 4680 or events@theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk

There is an administrative fee of £95 per person to extend the flights. Any costs over and above the original fare we have for the group will also be passed onto the individual to pay. Flight extensions are on a first-come first-served basis and are strictly subject to availability. Please contact Ultimate Challenges as soon as possible and no later than 3 months before the departure date.

GROUND ARRANGEMENTS AND HOTELS

We have a specialist team that can assist with your ground arrangements once the flight extension has been confirmed. Please note they tailor make an itinerary to an individual, so we would need to know a rough budget before passing on enquiries to them. They typically base their proposals on 4* or 5* accommodation.



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Fundraising Support



FUNDRAISING



HOW MUCH WILL I NEED TO RAISE AND WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE TRIP?

To secure a place on the trip each participant will need to **pay a non refundable entry fee of £250** and each participant will need to **raise a minimum of £2,500 in sponsorship**.

We understand this is a lot of money, but we have an experienced Fundraising Team who will help and support you with your fundraising ideas, activities and events. Each year, we support over 100 participants prepare for their overseas challenges so are confident we can share our expertise to help you reach the finish line. We can also share a range of tools and resources that can help you plan, deliver and promote your fundraising efforts..

Most participants pay the initial £250 non refundable deposit themselves and then fundraise the remaining total required for the challenge however, you may wish to cover the total costs yourself. Should you want to follow this option, you will be able to count gift aid towards your final total (this will be subject to the gift aid being successfully screened by HMRC). If you would like more information on this please contact our **Overseas Events Lead Amy Penketh: amy.penketh@wales.nhs.uk**.

It is the responsibility of each participant to manage their fundraising page and ensure their total accurately reflects the funds they have raised both online and offline.

We will supply you with a fundraising guide which is full of useful tips, ideas & legalities to help you through your fundraising journey. It is important to read this before beginning your fundraising.

Following this, it is a good idea to start your fundraising as soon as possible, as this will allow you the maximum amount of time to reach, and hopefully exceed your target.

We will be communicating regularly with all participants when 25%, 50% and 75% fundraising target checkpoints are approaching. this will give the fundraising team a good guide on who might need some extra support along the way.

If you are not quite reaching your checkpoints, please don't be alarmed if we reach out to you for a discussion around your fundraising. We really want you to succeed and will help in the best possible way we can.

If you do not feel confident in reaching your fundraising target by the fundraising deadline, we will be happy to discuss your options.

When you are organising any fundraising events please ensure that any promotional materials clearly state that the funds raised will be used for the purposes of the overseas challenge you are engaged in.

Please ensure your material's carry the official trek logo, and the in Aid of Velindre logo too.

This will ensure that each person that sponsors you, or donates to a fundraising event that you're organising, realises that a percentage of their sponsorship / donation will be used towards the trip's costs.

Included will be:

- Group transfers to/from UK airport
- International return flights
- All food (unless otherwise stated)
- Local English-speaking head guide and support staff
- Shared twin accommodation hotels and tents on trek
- Drinking water on challenge
- Internal road transfers
- Celebration dinner
- UK Doctor whilst on the challenge

CAN I COVER THE COST OF THE TRIP MYSELF?

Your initial non-refundable registration fee will meet some of the costs of travel and general organisation of the trip. A percentage of these costs will also have to come out of the money you raise - with an event of this size, this is unavoidable. This means that each person who sponsors you must realise that a percentage of your fundraising will be used to cover these costs.

If you feel unhappy about this, you can speak to us about paying for a section or all the costs of the trek yourself around £1,150 - and fundraise for the remainder.

CAN GIFT AID COUNT TOWARDS MY FUNDRAISING TARGET?

Yes, you can claim Gift Aid on a fundraising target that includes travel, provided that the donor pays the cost of flights and accommodation themselves.

If you are not paying for the trip costs yourself, gift aid is not able to count towards your fundraising total.

When planning towards your fundraising target, please remember it can take 8-10 weeks for a Gift Aid claim to be processed and for Velindre University NHS Trust Charity to receive the money from HMRC.

CAN I CARRY FUNDS OVER TO A FUTURE OVERSEAS CHALLENGE?

Funds raised under a specific Event and/or Event logo must be allocated to that Event's fundraising total. Donations cannot be transferred between Events unless this has been pre-agreed, in writing, with Velindre University NHS Trust's Charity and clearly communicated to donors in advance. If a Participant completes one Event and begins fundraising for another, they must create a new fundraising page (e.g., JustGiving) for the new Event and include full details of the new Event.

Have another question?

If you have any questions about the event that you'd like to ask the team, please don't hesitate to call us on 029 2031 6211 or email: amy.penketh@wales.nhs.uk

Velindre, the Hospital Of Hope is Wales' Premier Cancer Centre and has been providing care, support and treatment to cancer patients and their families for over 65 years.

Velindre is the major provider of radiotherapy and other specialised anti-cancer treatments in Wales. We all know of family, friends and loved ones who have been touched by cancer.

The incidence of cancer is rising by 2% each year in Wales with nearly 20,000 people diagnosed with this illness each year.

However as Velindre staff strive every day to deliver the best cancer services through exceptional care, more people than ever are living with cancer – survival rates have doubled in the last 40 years through better treatments and earlier detection.

We want to lead in the delivery and development of compassionate, individualised and effective cancer care to achieve outcomes comparable with the best in the world.

Donations to Velindre fund things over and above what the NHS provide, so fundraising really does make a huge difference to our patients and their families.

We aim to provide the best care, when people need us most.



Your donations could help fund...

- ✔ Over £1.5 million each year dedicated to pioneering research and clinical trials.
Did you know? Velindre Cancer Charity currently contribute funding to over 40 active clinical trials.
- ✔ 50% of all Specialist Nurses at Velindre Cancer Centre.
- ✔ An entire team of psychologists and counsellors at Velindre Cancer Centre, including a dedicated staff psychologist.
- ✔ Our hospital volunteer programme that enables 60+ volunteers to donate their time each week.
- ✔ All of Velindre's scalp cooling machines that help minimise hair loss for a patient receiving chemotherapy.
- ✔ Wig vouchers and headscarves for patients experiencing hair thinning or hair loss.
- ✔ Two dedicated family and relative rooms providing a safe space for quality family time in a non-clinical setting.

Thank you for your support!

For further details please contact:

Velindre Cancer Charity, Velindre Cancer Centre

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