

# Route 666

## A Very Moroccan Cycling Adventure



“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

MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE FOLLOWED BY ROUTE 666  
APRIL SAT. 27 - SAT. MAY 4, 2019  
Support and visit the Education For All Houses

### Day 1 and 2 The Marrakech Atlas Etape

This tour starts with accommodation on a B&B basis in the four-star hotel Kasbah Zalagh (or similar), which is close to the start/finish of the MAE, for the nights of Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th April.

### Day 3 to 8: ROUTE 666

The five-night adventure starts on Monday 29th April and ends on Saturday 4th May, (either after breakfast if you are taking a flight or after arrival in Marrakech in the afternoon. Accommodation is not included for the night of 4th April). The tour is on a full board basis and the Kasbah du Toubkal team (logistical partner of the Marrakech Atlas Etape) will be taking great care of us with full back up services and fantastic picnics en route. Accommodation will be more basic (basically the best in the area) and might even include a night's camping in which case all equipment will be provided. The total distance of the round trip from Marrakech is about 666 kms with a height gain of approximately 6666 metres (remember we have vehicle support, so do not be frightened away by this). We will reduce this a little by taking transport from Marrakech to the top of the Tizi n Tichka (2260 m) or perhaps to Taddert allowing those that wish to cycle the spectacular final 20km of the pass.

### Day 3: Distance 68 km. Altitude: start 2260m, end 1340m

We transport ourselves and bikes to the top of the Tichka pass in the morning, ready to start with some serious downhill off the pass, quickly turning left onto a minor road that follows the old Canon Track described by Gavin Maxwell in Lords of the Atlas. The road is surfaced but is a little rough with some steep but short uphill sections. Coffee break at Telouet where the remains of the famous Kasbah still exist. The route from here to

Anemiter has lost most of its surface and tough tyres are strongly advised although you do not need an off road-bike.

From Anemiter we follow the beautiful gorge-like valley south through desert mountain scenery to Ait Benhadou, where we will spend the night at a lovely small hotel within walking distance of the ruins of the ancient city, the backdrop to dozens of major feature films and television programmes.

**Day 4: Distance 91km. Altitude: start 1340m dropping to 1200m in first 10km, End 2200m**

We head off to re-join the main road where we head north for 45kms back towards the Tichka. At Agouim we turn west onto one of Morocco's road gems. Almost totally unused by any tourists, we skirt along the south of the High Atlas through stunning scenery, including views of Jbel Toubkal, North Africa's highest mountain, and friendly villages which have barely changed in the past century, other than for the recent arrival of electricity and this surfaced road. The route is undulating with some very steep but short uphill and downhill sections, but overall we are gaining altitude until we cross the barren 2000 metre pass after about 36kms, where we may camp beneath a brilliant night sky or our team may take over a local house.



**Day 5: Distance 95 km. Altitude: start 2200m, end 566m**

Do not be fooled by the bare facts. Overall today we are losing a lot of altitude but especially towards the end of the day there are some uphill sections. This section has been described by the author of the definitive book on off road motorcycling in Morocco as very like the Hunza Valley on the Karakoram Highway, but prettier. Having cycled the KH Trevor Rowell (one of the tour organisers) can confirm this. We end the day at Aoulouz.

**Day 6: Distance 71km. Altitude: start 566m, end 2092m**

An initial ride of slightly more than 30kms on an almost flat road through the argan forests of the Sous Plain take us to the right turn towards Marrakech and the start of the famous Tizi n Test Pass(2092 m). This is a quiet road which winds up gradually through the foothills of the High Atlas. At times a bit full of potholes but suddenly the surface changes as we hit the new section of road. Eventually we come round a bend and see the full splendour of the final 17km zig-zags to the top of the pass. The gradient on all of this ascent is reasonable, rather like an Alpine pass. We spend the night at a small auberge on the top of the pass.



**Day 7: Distance 78km. Altitude: start 2092m, end 872m**

Again mostly downhill although there are a few uphill sections, one just after we start and a few towards the end of the day. This is another spectacular day of scenery and we pass two of the Education for All houses, one in Tlat-n-Yacoub after 40km, where we will have lunch, and the other just outside Ouirgane at the end of the day. We also pass the famous Berber mosque at Tin Mal. We spend our last night in comfort at the Bergerie auberge where there is a swimming pool and lovely gardens.

**Day 8: Distance 80 km. Altitude: start 872m, end 453m**

Finally back to Marrakech via the beautiful Kik Plateau. And once again the bare statistics are misleading. We start our day with an 11km pass rising to 1218m followed by a short descent into Asni, where we can have coffee in one of the EFA houses. From here we leave the main Marrakech road to climb up through the holy town of Moulay Brahim and onto the limestone Kik Plateau. If we have a clear day the views of the High Atlas are seriously spectacular. The road has a good surface and is very quiet but is a little undulating before a



lovely descent to the reservoir of Lalla Takerkoust. After lunch we follow a big smooth road all the way back to Marrakech.

Transport can be arranged for those who need to go direct to the airport for a return flight. For anyone wishing to cycle back Marrakech (where the tour ends), this is possible. Accommodation is not included for the night of the 4th but can be arranged at extra cost. The tour works out about 80km per day and 800 metres per day. Challenging and exciting but not difficult or beyond the ability of any fit cyclist with determination and a sense of adventure, with the security of vehicle support and a great team to look after us.

*Come and join us.*

COST: £950 of which a minimum of £250 goes to support Education for All.

#### INCLUDED IN THE TOUR

- 2 Nights Marrakech on a B&B basis
- Entry to the Marrakech Atlas Etape
- 5 Nights on a full board basis as detailed above in Route 666
- Vehicle support throughout Route 666
- Water will be provided throughout the tour.

#### NOT INCLUDED

- Insurance – compulsory, you must have adequate travel insurance
- Bike hire and helmets. It is a condition of booking that participants agree to wear cycle helmets. Bikes and equipment can be arranged through Argan Sports.
- Personal spending money and drinks excluding water.

For more information contact Mike McHugo at [mike@discover.ltd.uk](mailto:mike@discover.ltd.uk)

**MARRAKECH**  
**ATLAS ETAPE**

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*Route 666*

A MOROCCAN CYCLING ADVENTURE APRIL 27 – MAY 4

In support of

**EDUCATION**  
*for all*  
**MOROCCO**