

# Kit List & Advice for Jbel Toubkal Expedition

## What to expect and some advice

The High Atlas Mountains are an amazing place, both culturally and as a mountaineering location. It offers us the chance to climb in an alpine environment, close to home in an adventurous location, with amazing weather and without the danger of crevasses. It is Africa but with a twist. Through the day I have experienced sunny temperatures only experienced that close to the desert, sometimes +20C, drinking mint tea and topping up the sun tan outside the Refuge is a joy. It is not always sunny though, temperatures at night can reach -15C and its pretty cool in the shade during the day time, and just like here in Scotland it can get quite wild with winds and snow so it is best to prepare for this when out on our expedition. That said, you are on holiday, and in Marrakech it will be pleasantly warm during the day and cool in the evenings. It is worth considering packing with this in mind, especially for a nice meal out in the Jemaa el-Fnaa just around the corner from your hotel.



The summit of Jbal Toubkal

## Alcohol, the law, social etiquette and religion

Morocco is mostly a dry country. Alcohol is available in some hotels and at shops called bottle shops. It is fine to drink at hotels like ours but would be considered quite rude to over consume. It would also be considered impolite to drink at the refuge at all, but don't worry there will be plenty of Berber whisky (mint tea) for you the whole trip.

We might not notice it very much in the mountains as it will be cool anyway, but in Marrakech it will be warm enough to wear shorts and t-shirts. With this in mind Morocco is very liberal as a Muslim country but is quite conservative compared to what we may be used to here in the UK. Men should wear shorts below the knee as should ladies. Women should also ensure clothes are below the knee and shoulders are covered. Loose fitting clothing would be considered most appropriate. We may see other westerners doing otherwise however you'll find the reception you receive will be much happier and warmer from the local peoples.

Couples are welcomed in Morocco as it is such a loving culture, however too much public affection is discouraged. Modesty is usually the best policy here.

Tea can be drank in either hand, however you should always eat with your right hand and sit cross legged to avoid showing the soles of your feet.



Mint tea is served in abundance throughout Morocco



## Money

The local currency is Moroccan Dirham(dh), and is a closed currency, meaning you can't get it from the post office here in the UK, you have to get it in country. There is only one exchange rate, and varies little from place to place, with the exception in my experience being the airport on occasion. I normally change a small amount at the airport to pay for the taxi, and then get the rest of my spends from an ATM to avoid traveling with large amounts of cash.

Some things not to miss here. Only take **English** sterling. They will not exchange Scottish pounds anywhere in Marrakech, trust me I've seen it tried. Euro and us dollars are also fine, however only crisp dollars are accepted.

There are ATM's right next to the hotel which are safe to use, and an exchange just around the corner. This is a cash driven society so work out how much you're going to need before we leave the city. The biggest denomination is 200dh, about 20 euros. It may prove impossible to break for purchases of less than 50dh so make sure when you're traveling in country you have plenty of 20 dh and 50dh notes. Be aware the 20 euro note is very similar to the 200dh note and is a 50 euro note to 100dh note, there's some great stories of taxi drivers getting paid 50 euro for a taxi that should have cost 100dh.



Be ready to barter before getting your wallet out

## Getting from the airport to the hotel

The first part of the adventure, and probably your first experience of haggling in country.

You need a "grand Taxi" usually a large Mercedes, you can find these just outside the terminal. They will take you right to the Riad Omar, you may have to walk 5 minutes depending on the time of day. As the Medina or Jemaa el Fna (Main square) is closed to traffic at certain times of day. It should cost around 150Dh or there about. They will try and charge 300Dh, stand your ground, smile and don't be scared to walk away.

## Language

There are a few languages spoken in Morocco, French, some English Moroccan Arabic and Berber. As with all foreign adventures giving the local dialect a go will get you miles in terms of favour amongst the locals. Here's a few ones to get you started.

**Hello** – Salam

**As-salāmu 'alaykum** - peace be upon you. To which you should reply, wa'alaykumu as-salām- and upon you, peace

**How are you** - Keef dayer

**I am good** - koulshi labas

**What's your name?** - Ashno smytek?

**My name is Sydney** - Smyti Sydney

**Thank you** - Shouk-ran

**Yes** - Na-am

**No** - L-a



# Kit List for Jbel Toubkal Expedition

## Clothing

- Long sleeved base layer top x 2 *merino ones are nice in the winter time and tend not to smell as much.* **For some bargains have a look in Decathlon or online at Sport Pursuit. I like the ones from Jottnar for winter, as well as Icebreaker.**
- Long johns or base layer bottoms x 1 *some base layer bottoms made from merino are also great, you can pick some fleecy ones if you run cold.* **TKMAXX can be a great place to hunt some of these out**
- Fleeces x 2 *I like a thick and a thinner one to give flexibility in layering, also consider a softshell jacket instead of one of the fleeces, they give wind protection so can be great on a nice day.* **I wear an Arcteryx Fortez hoody and a Haglofs Skarn winter softshell but the Simond options present a great bargain with high performance,**
- Underwear *synthetic wicking underwear can make your days out a bit more comfortable and can affect your core temperature* **head to TKMAXX for some more bargains, look out for Reebok and under amour**
- Trousers x 1 *a set of mid weight walking trousers synthetic or softshell work best, absolutely no cotton!* **I wear a set of softshell ones on nice days with a set of long john's underneath, again Decathlon here is your friend the Simond Alpi pants are great value.**
- Waterproof jacket *make sure it fits with some clothes under it and you can still use the pockets with your rucksack on. Buy Gore-Tex and save yourself a lot of drama and getting wet.* **I wear an Arcteryx Beta Lt jacket it's Gore-Tex and does the job great, but I spend a lot of time in a waterproof jacket. Have a look at the Simond mountain light jacket for a great budget option.**
- Waterproof over trousers *get ones with at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  zips on the side, you will need to be able to get them on over your boots unless there is no wind at all we will probably be wearing these up high. Again, go Gore-Tex and stay dry. Avoid ski pants as they are baggy and will catch on crampons.* **Arcteryx Beta AR pants work great for me I bought them on sale on sport pursuit online. For a budget pair the Berghuas deluge pants work well.**

## Clothing - continued

- Down jacket this is not 100% necessary, but it will make your life much more comfortable and they do last if you take good care of them. **I wear a Jottnar Fjorn jacket but a budget option might be by Simond Makalu II jacket, it's 3 times less expensive than comparable models from other brands**
- Wool hat
- Sun Hat
- Gloves x 3 a few pairs of gloves gives you flexibility in your layering, think one thin, one thick and one extra thick pair or a pair of mitts. **British company SNOWSHEPARD make great leather work gloves that are lined with fibre pile, and they do some mitts as well which are nice and toasty. Top tip from me is if you buy leather ones like these, use boot dubbin to make them more waterproof.**
- Socks x 4 *I use Bridgedale socks and only Bridgedale, I always have so I've never moved away from them. If you suffer from blisters or cold feet, try some cool-max liners inside the warm socks. I find the mid weight trekkers do everything for me. Smart wool does some great socks for keeping your feet warm, there's no saving to be done here I'm afraid, your feet are worth quality*
- Boots B3 rated. *Shop around and see what fits best, go for maximum comfort and nothing else. If you want to try before you buy both Ellis Brigham's and Cotswolds in Fort William rent winter boots suitable for Toubkal. **If this is going to be a one off for you, you can rent boots for the trip from [www.expeditionkithire.co.uk](http://www.expeditionkithire.co.uk)***
- Gaiters, I hate them, but they do help keep your boots and your feet dry.
- Trainers *for wandering around the city and maybe some of the walk in*
- Sandals *for the City and for wearing in the hut*





## Snow Equipment

- Crampons - make sure these fit your boots!!!! I like ones with a clip at the back and a plastic basket at the front, I also think 12 points are the way to go, although 10-point ones will be fine for Toubkal and most winter walking. **Grivel G12 or Airtech crampons are great, keep an eye on eBay for a second-hand bargain. If you are going to hire boots, consider getting the boots, crampons and ice axe as a package**
- Ice axe - a general purpose mountaineering tool with an adze/shovel (no hammers please) **I like the DMM cirque for walking and mountaineering. At 5'9" my axe is around 60 cm long. The longer the axe the more comfortable it will be for walking, but it will be heavier and more cumbersome on steeper terrain.**
- Sunglasses -DO NOT FORGET THESE. UV radiation combined with the sun is serious business no Ray Bans here. Go buy some sports sunglasses from an outdoor shop, I would recommend Cat 3 lenses as a minimum, check they fit well and don't let excess light through, remember the sun comes from below as well as from the sides and above here. **Decathlon do some bargains that fit really well! I spent £100 recently on a new pair for going on an expedition, only to find my friend had spent £30 in decathlon and they were miles better! That said I like the Julbo ones I have. Pro tip make sure the case is half good and buy a set of tethers to wear with the glasses.**
- Ski goggles -DO NOT FORGET THESE. With winds over 35mph the snow will start to whip up and make it hard to see, pop some ski goggles on and all of a sudden you can see again. Magic! **Same as above, remember the case and make sure they offer some sun protection.**



## General Kit

- Duffel bag - buy a weather resistant one. Must have shoulder straps, mules will only travel as far as the snow line fully loaded so for the rest of the trek to the hut they will be portered through man power. I suggest around the 90l mark. **Cotswolds currently have a great deal on RAB ones**
- Rucksack- buy a 40 litre one or around that mark. Make sure you can fit your sleeping bag inside it for the walk up to the hut (this is just a precaution) but it will need to be able to carry all your kit when we are out on the hill, spare clothes, crampons, Ice ace ECT **Buy one that fits well, have a look at women's and men's specific fits, and has a waist strap. The Lowe alpine peak ascent is a great buy.**
- Dry bags – buy quite a few of these to fit all of your kit in, organised and dry. **The Karrimor ones are great.**
- A good three season sleeping bag- don't buy a super-hot one, there are lots of blankets available at the refuge. **Synthetic over down, they last longer and take more abuse over the years. If you don't want to buy one you can hire again [www.expeditionkithire.co.uk](http://www.expeditionkithire.co.uk)**
- Sleeping bag liner – Silk **Decathlon offer the best buy here again.**
- Water Bottle – x 2 Nalgene bottles or similar with a wide mouth. They can be filled with hot water so they don't freeze through the day. **eBay or amazon. Look for BPA free ones.**
- Trekking poles- I really like them, especially in the snow going uphill, make sure they have snow baskets (wider plastic baskets). **I like the Black diamond Alpine FLZ as they pack easier in my hold luggage.**





## Bits and Bobs

- Head torch and spare batteries
- Sun cream and lip block – a couple of smaller tubes are best. **I like the Life venture High altitude ones, it's sun cream and lip balm all in the one stick.**
- Camera – with spare batteries. **There is a charging point in the refuge**
- Wash bag – include wet wipes and toilet paper, **there's none in the refuge**
- Cash – as advised above
- Travel wallet – tan coloured waist ones work best
- Personal first aid – *any medication you require such as inhalers etc. please also bring some paracetamol and ibuprofen and any blister plasters you may need.* **Atlas Mountaineering will have a comprehensive expedition first aid kit for emergencies**

