



TRIP ITINERARY

MOROCCO: THE DIRT MERCHANT

TYPE: XC

A BACKCOUNTRY XC ADVENTURE – 10 DAYS, 9 NIGHTS.

TRIP DETAILS

An epic ride supported by Land Rovers, local guides and Big Mountain guides. Unique hotels and basic 'gite' style accommodation. Great trails in a very beautiful land... a remote and cultural mountain bike trip of a lifetime.

2008 DATES

Sunday, November 2 to Tuesday, November 11, 2008

LAND COST

\$2595 Canadian

JOINING IN

Marrakech, Morocco

Nowhere else on earth can you find such an exotic chaos of peoples and landscapes than in Morocco. A French protectorate for over 30 years, it offers a smorgasborg of European, Arab and Berber Influences. On the Dirt Merchant we'll cycle up to high passes and eat lunch overlooking the sub-Sahara, through strange moon-like canyons, down long flowing descents into lush date-palm oasis'. We'll ride amongst roaming shepherds who have been tending to sheep for generations and meet nomads who travel around the land selling their wares. We'll watch the setting African sun, feast on lamb and dance into the night under the desert stars. Traveling on a bike, the locals are disarmed and invite us into their world. This is Morocco. The High and Middle Atlas is a mountain bike Mecca with endless singletrack and peaks over 13,000 feet high (4000 meters). Dave McDougall, a Canadian who has lived and guided in Morocco for over 8 years will lead us each day on our bikes. The Dirt Merchant, as Dave puts it, "is a dream mountain bike trip not to be missed."

***I travelled up this road, and I travelled down that,
What have I to show for it? Nothing flat.***

All I brought were slippers which I took off and left by the door.

A silly calf ate them, soles and all.

Moroccan saying

ITINERARY

The following is a general outline for the Dirt Merchant trip.

SUNDAY, NOV 2, DAY 1 – ARRIVE IN MARRAKECH, TRANSFER TO HOTEL

All major flights will come through Europe and arrive in the evening. We'll meet you at the Menara Airport and escort you to our hotel which is centrally located in the old part of Marrakech, just 5 minute walk from the focal point of the city, the remarkable central square of the Djemaa-el-Fna. Hotel Riad Sara or Al Jareza: www.marrakech-riads.net

MONDAY, NOV 3, DAY 2 – EXPLORE MARRAKECH

Today is a great day to explore the Medina, it's labyrinth-like streets teeming with sights, sounds and scents. We'll also make sure that everyone's bikes are built up and that we are prepared for the trip. Tonight we will feast on a roof-top restaurant overlooking Marrakech. Again tonight we stay at Hotel Riad Sara or Al Jareza.

TUESDAY, NOV 4, DAY 3 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: ZWAT AHANZAL

We make an early start for the spectacular 6-hour drive to «les Cathedrales des Rochers», situated at the north-eastern end of the Atlas. Driving eastwards towards Fez, the summits of the High Atlas are clearly visible off to our right. We have the option to ride this afternoon on a doubletrack road in a spectacular area. Tonight, we stay at a truly remote and basic Berber gite nestled in the mountains.

WEDNESDAY, NOV 5, DAY 4 - ATLAS TRAVERSE: TIMIT

The start of our ride is on a dirt road that the locals use for transporting goods between mountain villages. We will transfer to the top of the pass at 2650 meters (8700 feet) where we begin today's adventure. The beauty of this 50km (30 mile) ride is that you can either ride on double track or if tempted drop off and ride the endless mule paths. There is one challenging 10km (6 mile) climb today. We end the day riding through lush valleys and numerous Berber villages and ride into the little town of Timit.

THURSDAY, NOV 6, DAY 5 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: AIT-N-ITO

This is probably the most challenging day of the trip but also the most rewarding. We start the day with an early morning 1.5 hr transfer through spectacular valley and villages. We then ride for about 5km (3 miles) along well traveled paths and meet our local Berber friends and load up our bikes on mules for the start of our 3.5hr hike to the top of the pass at 2800 meters (9100 feet). At this point you will realize how remote we are and how spectacular of a country you are traveling through. Then we'll descend on some of the most spectacular singletrack in Morocco to a town that is only accessible by trails. We finish our final 10km (6 miles) of cycling along a river bed to the town of Ait-n-Ito.

FRIDAY, NOV 7, DAY 6 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: OUARZAZATE

After a well-deserved sleep-in we transfer to another high pass where we start today's ride. At this point you can freeride on numerous arid mountain tops or and ride the exhilarating road mostly downhill into the pre-Sahara desert. Tonight we sleep in the bustling town of Ouarzazate where the classic film Laurence of Arabia was filmed and enjoy some well-deserved comforts.

SATURDAY, NOV 8, DAY 7 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: TIS-N-TISCHA

This morning it's back to the mountains and the highest pass in North Africa, the Tis-n-Tischa at 2150 meters (7000 feet). Today's ride consists of mainly single track with some short hike-a-bike sections. The ride takes us through small villages with no road access, along canyon river beds and along mule tracks that have existed for thousands of years. Our Land Rovers meet us at the end of the day and transfer us to the beautiful Ourika Valley.

SUNDAY, NOV 9, DAY 8 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: OURIKA

After enjoying the local market we head up and over to the Ourigane Valley along double track road for beautiful views of Toubkal, Morocco's highest peak. Today our drivers will cook us a traditional «Tagine» lunch, outside over an open campfire. Along our ride we will ride through small local villages, occasionally dipping of on single track sections with North Africa's highest peak, Mount Toubkal, on your left.

MONDAY, NOV 10, DAY 9 – ATLAS TRAVERSE: OUIRGANE

Today you can either come along on an early morning ride along the numerous single track trails that link up the small villages in the Ourigane Valley or simply relax by the pool or pamper yourself to a spa at the nearby Hammam. We'll transfer to Marrakech in the afternoon where we'll prep the bikes for the flight and do some last minute shopping. Sleep in Marrakech, final night festivities!

TUESDAY, NOV 11, DAY 10 – FLY HOME

This morning we will drive you out to the airport for the return home.

DETAILS

LAND COST

\$2595 Canadian

Single supplement: \$425. Available for certain nights only, please inquire with Big Mountain for more information.

MAX GROUP SIZE: 12

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Expert Leadership: 2 Canadian guides and 2 local driver/guides.
- Accommodation in hotels and 'gites'
- All meals except one dinner
- Airport pick-up and all transportation
- Detailed pre-departure information
- Big Mountain t-shirt

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?

International and domestic airfare; personal travel and medical insurance; optional tipping to leaders and local staff; airport taxes and excess baggage charges (if any); your bike and related equipment needed to ride; personal items like drinks and snacks.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

The **technical ability** required for this trip is rated as 'intermediate and above.' In other words, the trails are mildly technical with generally mild grades. Some exposed areas will be encountered and loose rocks are common.

For **fitness level**, participants must be fit to very fit. All participants must train accordingly to fully enjoy this trip. Even though there will be Land Rover support each day you will enjoy the trip a lot more if you are in good shape. The altitude, jet lag recovery and accumulation of multiple long days of riding in a foreign land will add up. But, the rewards are FANTASTIC.

Approximate total mileage ridden on The Dirt Merchant: 300 kms (186 miles). On most days participants can ride in the Land Rovers if they need a break.

***There are walking and hiking sections and some exposure at times. Please contact us for more details.**

BIKE AND EQUIPMENT

The perfect bike for The Dirt Merchant is a light weight dual suspension. A hard tail with a good front fork will also suffice. Also required: helmet, good riding / walking shoes, gloves and clothing for all types of weather. All participants are required to bring extra brake pads, tubes, patch kit, extra cleats for shoes and any other parts specific to your bike – and a small day pack, or large hydration pack is necessary. All participants are required to have their **bikes in excellent working order** before the trip begins.

LODGING AND FOOD

"Gite" in Morocco means basic accommodation with a hot shower and cold drinks at the end of the day. The quality of the accommodation on this trip vary from very basic mountain huts to beautiful hotels. We believe in choosing comfortable accommodation with character with views unparalleled. We will make sure that everyone is well fed. It is

advised that all participants bring a box of energy bars with them. Please let us know upon booking if you have special diet needs.

CLIMATE

In big mountains, weather can change quickly and drastically - it could be 30 degrees celcius one day and then nearly freezing on a mountain top the next day – even in Morocco. Eventough we will be riding in an arid landscape, the temperature can dip dramatically at night.

THE NEXT STEP

Call us toll free at 1-866-894-0220, or email at info@ridebig.com to confirm that there is space on this trip. Then, fill out our secure online registration form on our website. Make sure that you have read and understand our Terms and Conditions and Waiver. Upon booking, we will send you detailed pre-departure information to make sure that you are well prepared for the adventure ahead.

WHY BIG MOUNTAIN IS YOUR CHOICE

Big Mountain Bike Adventures is the pioneer for performance XC, all-mountain, DH and freeride mountain biking adventures. We know that to find the very best trails, you have to ride with locals. All of our trips are designed in part by local riders and often guided with local riders and professional Big Mountain guides. We aim to provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our participants.

REFERENCES

We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travellers.

QUESTIONS

Feel free to call us at 1.866.894.0220 or email info@ridebig.com if you have any questions. We are here to help!

CONTACT US

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