



Charity Expedition 2016

Rif Peaks Challenge 21-24 October (Fri-Mon)

Join the Rifcom team and fellow sponsors to raise funds for incredible projects in the impoverished regions of Morocco. Since 2008, Rifcom (*Rif Community Foundation* - www.rifcom.org) has been undertaking a wide range of projects in Morocco. As a volunteer organization that is non-profit in origin, we fund our projects through donations and via events and expeditions such as this.



After a number of successful fundraising challenges in the Rif, Atlas and Sahara regions of Morocco, the Rifcom team returns in 2016 to undertake *The Rif Peaks Challenge*. Our primary aim is to climb to the roof of the Rif! Over 3 days we'll ascend the highest ranges of this beautiful landscape and test our own limits at the same time.

Above all, come learn what Rifcom has been doing in Morocco for the last 7 years and witness the direct impact you have on impoverished Moroccan communities by employing locals, training guides, co-educating the community and spreading a message of peace, solidarity and good will. Our expeditions are challenging yet the feel-good factor is extremely high. Become part of our community, get into shape and make an impact on those who need a hand. Marhababik!

Trekking the Rif Summits

The Rif Mountains are a combination of wild limestone ridges, dense forests, rustic hamlets and an abundance of flora and fauna. It's an exotic landscape and best appreciated from heights above 2000 meters (6,560 feet). We'll trek to the summits of the region's most impressive peaks – including the mythical *Jebel Mousa*, the highest peak on the Straits of Gibraltar. En route you'll pass through remote villages where little has changed in centuries.

Expect long, enduring days over ancient footpaths, mountain tracks and boulder scrambling. The views from the summits are well worth the hard work! At night we camp or sleep in the simple mountain *gites* of the Rif and enjoy wonderful local food in our traditional commune style. For your efforts, you'll deeply enhance Rifcom's ongoing projects and reward yourself with a life changing experience at the same time!





Itinerary

The expedition begins the moment you leave home. Consider every portion of your experience part of the journey and the *Challenge*; if you do so, you'll be enriched. From a ferry crossing the Straits of Gibraltar to the treks, transfers and rolling out your sleeping bag in place very different from the familiarity of home, this is no ordinary holiday. It's a charity challenge so be prepared to have your senses provoked and your comfort levels rocked throughout. It



will change the way you view yourself and the world. Below is a general outline of the expedition. Exact locations, distances and terrain descriptions are subject to some alterations based on weather patterns, route access and final number of participants.

Day 1 – The JOURNEY to the Rif & Jebel Musa climb

Departure from Gibraltar / Spain by private coach to Ferry Port. Early morning ferry crossing to Morocco and transfer direct to base of Jebel Musa. Ascend Jebel Musa Peak. Our introductory hike to the Rif begins with climbing the classic peak most observed from European shores. Situated directly on the Straits of Gibraltar, Musa is not exceptionally high but will put us to the test on day one. Considered one of the Pillars of Hercules (twinned with the Rock of Gibraltar), the mountain plays a key role in ancient mythology. It's also a beautiful and challenging route as it's the gateway to the Rif. After the climb, we descend to near sea level and are transferred by coach to the central Rif (2 hours). Our first night stay is in Merchkala. Here we find a simple gite (guest house), where we divide the group into shared rooms and / or tent camp on the grounds. Today lunch and dinner is provided.

<i>HEIGHT: 850 m / 2800 feet</i>	<i>TREKKING TIME: 6 hours approximately</i>	<i>DIFFICULTY: Moderate-Difficult</i>
<i>ELEVATION GAIN: 800 m / 2200 feet and the same for the descent</i>	<i>TERRAIN: Open terraced slopes and rocky outcrops. Musa has a wide, central valley leading to a pass followed by a steeper scramble section to the summit. Expect stone under foot and scratchy plants.</i>	<i>ROUTE STYLE: 70% of route follows a simple track, some rock scrambling over rougher, steep terrain required at the top.</i>



Day 2 – Talassemtane National Park & *Jebel Lakraa

Today we do a massive trek through one of north Africa’s most important bio-reserves, the Talassemtane National Park. Our target is the summit of Jebel Lakraa – the highest elevation in the region of Chefchouen and the National Park itself. This is a beautiful and remote landscape in the heart of the Rif and the sense of achievement standing on the summit of Jebel Lakraa will transform you. We’ll pass locals trekking to/from villages and see herdsman and women in the terraced fields throughout the day. This is a long ascent and descent and after a very early start, we arrive to our base of Azilane by early evening. Tonight’s simple gite offers shared sleeping space in rooms or you can tent on the roof top under a sky of stars! All meals are included today. *Note – Jebel Tissouka (2122 m / 6962 feet), will be the replacement peak for Jebel Lakraa should circumstances change the routing this day.

HEIGHT: 2159 m / 7083 feet	TREKKING TIME: 8-10 hours approximately	DIFFICULTY: Challenging
ELEVATION GAIN: Expect in excess of 1000 m / 2500 ft climbing today.	TERRAIN: Forest and open slopes covered in pine, oak and pinsapo trees. Much of this region is limestone crags with impressive valleys and steep high slopes. There is much rock underfoot today.	ROUTE STYLE: A combination of forest tracks, animal grazing trails and some scrambling. This is a long day with a big climb.

Day 3 – CHEFCHOUEN & the Twin Peaks: Jebel Chuiat & *Jebel Kalaa

Today we attempt two distinct peaks in the vicinity of Chefchouen (Chef). It requires an early start to arrive at Chefchouen by evening. Jebel Choulhate stands guard behind Chef and throughout winter can be admired for its snow covered summit. Jebel Kalaa marks the highest point of the National Park’s western frontier. Both summits offer spectacular views of the entire region and perhaps to the Atlantic and Mediterranean shores at the same time. Another long, challenging day with a steep descent after the second peak to the village of Kalaa where we have a chance to witness village life in the Rif. Tonight we stay in a simple hostel in Chefchouen and have a celebration dinner in a unique local restaurant. All meals included today. *Note – our primary aim is to summit Jebel Chuiat today and although we still make the hard trek to Kalaa village, reaching its summit is dependent on variables.

HEIGHT: Jebel Choulhate 2038 m / 7083 ft Jebel Kalaa 1616 m / 5302 ft	TREKKING TIME: 10 hours approximately	DIFFICULTY: Challenging & Long
ELEVATION GAIN: Expect to climb in excess of 1000 m / 3280 ft on this day with a descent of approximately 1500 m / 4920 ft	TERRAIN: Craggy limestone outcrops with pinsapo forests on the summits. Scratchy bushes at knee level with stones underfoot and some scree slopes on the descent.	ROUTE STYLE: The start is a nice, wide track until near first summit, then a scramble from there over goat tracks. Steep down to Kalaa village and then a good track and trail to Chefchouen.



Day 4 – Morning Visit Chefchouen & Return Home in afternoon

This morning is free time to explore the medina of Chefchouen and enjoy the cafes and souvenir shops while giving your body a well deserved rest. You may also try a Hammam experience (local style bath house or a more luxurious scrub down!). Early afternoon we transfer by private coach to the ferry port and return to Spain & Gibraltar. Estimated arrival time home 19-21:00 (pending final travel arrangements). Breakfast only included today.



Expedition Price

800 Pounds Sterling

Inclusions

- * All transfers in private coach, ferry, van and other means direct from the Gibraltar / Spain frontier
- * 2 nights gite (basic house) or tent camp accommodation / 1 night Chefchouen simple hotel
- * Tents included for camping (please bring sleeping bag and bed mat)
- * All meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on final day
- * Trip leadership team and local Moroccan team responsible for all logistics
- * Mules and/or 4x4 for carrying larger personal bags
- * Insurance (Public Liability)
- * Risk assessment and Emergency Contingency Plan throughout

Non Inclusions

- * Group tip for local Moroccan guides / drivers / cooks
- * Private health & travel insurance (it is obligatory that you have this personal insurance)
- * Visa (if required for Morocco – please check if your passport is not European, Commonwealth or North American)
- * Additional drinks and snacks
- * Additional private transfers not included in the itinerary





HOW IS YOUR MONEY USED?

At RifCom we are determined to spend the majority of trip funds on the ground in Morocco. This is core to our charity's philosophy:

- 70% Paid direct to local ground handler from Morocco.** This licensed business looks after all the ground affairs for this expedition. This includes accommodation arrangements, food catering, transport, materials for construction where necessary, hiring and training of local guides and assistants, arranging support personal and most importantly, communicating with the villages directly and local officials to earn the trust so that RifCom can perform its community work.
- 30% Paid for RifCom external services.** These include group transfers to/from Tarifa Ferry port; Public Liability Insurance and Administration fees of Adventurebug Ltd (who oversee the expedition logistics, insurance, event administration, safety & risk factors and liaison with the Moroccan ground team).

I'M INTERESTED, WHAT DO I DO NOW?

1. **Contact** Rifcom by email: info@rifcom.org and request the REGISTRATION PACK
2. **Fill in all details** to register and make the deposit to the Rifcom Bank Account (details in Registration Pack)
3. **Rifcom will email you** a confirmation of your place and any pre-travel information.
4. **Do some fitness training** to prepare yourself better and follow Rifcom on our website and FB pages!

** To avoid disappointment, please register without hesitation. This expedition is limited in numbers...*

THE RIF PEAK CHALLENGE – *What to know*

Who can Participate

Essentially anyone who has a sense of adventure and the desire to help make a difference. This is a trekking challenge and therefore, long days on foot over mixed terrain – hills, forests, river crossings and more!

Are there Minimum and Maximum Numbers

The minimum number is 20 and the maximum is 40. We are flexible with numbers but the minimum number is necessary for the trip to be cost effective.

What luggage do I bring

Travel light and bring only what you need in a kit bag plus your day hiking pack of 25 litres minimum. Your main bag should be flexible, canvas or waterproof type that is easily packed onto mules or our 4x4 shuttles between villages. You will have to carry it on an off the ferry, the buses, etc. Overall, we recommend that you travel light as possible – tho leave room for a few souvenir purchases too!



What are the Route Conditions Like

There's a wide variety of conditions on this trip from long, extended climbs to rocky narrow footpaths into canyons. Crossing rivers on rudimentary bridges, logs and stones can be expected – and fun! Do expect wet boots, backs and even hair at times – whether it's hot or cold. Our experiences put our own version of suffering in perspective once we witness daily life in the harsh Rif environments!

Preparation

As far as charity challenges go, this is a difficult trek and you will need to do training beforehand. Expect long, full days in varying weather conditions on foot - carrying both your own body weight and a day pack with water and spare clothing. You will need to train your aerobic conditioning and leg strength to get through the full days (8-10 hours). Altitude sickness (AMS) will not play a role however you will feel variations in climate and much exposure to the elements regardless. We consider this event suitable for anyone who can trek full days and summit peaks that are non-technical (no ropes necessary). We like to think this event is open to almost anyone who is ready to take on 3 days of challenging hikes and scrambles. It can be as much a test on the body as on the emotional and mental aspects as well.

Lodgings

There are 3 nights total away from home and 4 days of travel (Friday am to Monday pm). 2 nights are in simple *Gite* guest houses where you share a room or you can sleep in a tent. The final night is a basic hostel in the center of Chefchouen village. Expect basic facilities throughout and be mindful of our impact on the fragile ecosystem around us. Bring wet wipes for extensive cleaning, toilet paper and be prepared to carry out your own waste or leave with the gite so it can be disposed of properly. Please only bring eco-friendly soap (phosphate free) for wash sessions in open water sources. Shower facilities exist. They are limited in number and hot water is scarce.

Meals

Meals are provided by our local gite guest house team. They are hygienically prepared (*using plenty of well-boiled water*), and food is nutritious, filling and energizing. Remember, this is no holiday and although some special diets can be catered to (BASIC vegetarian and some allergies), our team will struggle with other areas such as celiac or vegan diets and food 'preferences'. We recommend you bring healthy snacks like nuts and raisins, power bars and dried fruit to top up your daily energy levels. Bottled mineral water (up to 3 litres/day) per person is provided for you at no charge.

Transport

All transfers are arranged by our Expedition leadership team. Transfers are private bookings and we use only the most reputable companies and, in the case of bus transport, licensed drivers for the Moroccan portion of the journey.

Weather

Weather in the Rif region is relatively moderate throughout the year but conditions vary significantly with altitude, season and between day and night, with the possibility of temperature change at any time. In the autumn we find it mild in the day with temperatures potentially reaching the mid 20's and cool at night. As it's a mountainous, coastal zone, be prepared for unstable weather that includes strong wind gusts, damp fog or cloud and light or heavy rain. To maximise your enjoyment of a trek in the Rif, we advise being fully prepared by taking the right clothing and equipment. A kit list is provided in this document.



Guides

Our guiding team is paramount to Rifcom's success on expeditions. Matt Butler from *Adventurebug Worldwide* – a specialist expedition tour operator will oversee the event logistics and guiding team. Our excellent local Rif guides are friendly, engaging characters who are passionate about their country. Some have limited language skills but do their best to communicate. With their local knowledge of the mountains, they are vital to us! They also encourage communication with local people – making them not only guides but hosts of their culture and ambassadors for Rifcom. We also have Rifcom leaders on board who are vital to the support of participants and the smooth flow of logistics.

Do I need Insurance

Yes, a simple travel and expatriation insurance will be needed on your behalf. Please insure it covers trekking in Morocco – all below 2500 meters. Rifcom will also offer a local insurance policy from Gibraltar to purchase.



ABOUT BRINGING DONATIONS:

We encourage you to donate items such as school supplies clothing, sweaters, water proof wear, blankets, shoes of any sort (except heels!), books (non religious content), games, sporting goods, medicines and toiletries, etc. We have a systematic way of distributing the goods so in light of the limits of space and time during the expedition we ask you to offer the donations to our storage centres in Spain and Gibraltar. Please contact us about this.

PLEASE, do not bring sweets, pens, money or toys to give out at random – particularly to children, as this defeats our purpose and creates a begging mentality. Remember, we are making an extraordinary donation through our community service alone and investing money locally into this form of tourism.



KIT LIST - Essential Equipment & Clothing:

Please bring only what you need. We recommend a small duffel bag or back pack. Do not bring large rolling bags or HARD cases. During the treks, you are required to carry your own water, camera, etc. Your main clothing bag will be transported by 4x4 to the camp each day.

____ A passport with MINIMUM 6 MONTHS VALIDITY remaining and Morocco Visa (European, Commonwealth, USA and many other countries **do not** require visas.

____ Good HIKING SHOES / BOOTS and HIKING socks (ensure boots/walking shoes are pre-worn in!).

____ Small personal First Aid Kit (*include prescription medicine you need, ibuprofen, motion sickness pills, spare glasses, compede brand plasters for blisters, hygienic hand wash, wound cleanser like iodine, plasters, rehydration and electrolyte tablets, etc*)

____ A hiking stick / pole (or 2) for the steep ascents and slippery descents on scree – this is A MUST!

____ 2 season sleeping bag and bed foam if you plan to sleep in a tent

____ Day sack/backpack (25 litres minimum) you'll need to carry your water, snacks, waterproof proof layer, etc.

____ Head torch / headlamp and good batteries

____ Lightweight waterproof over-trousers / rain-pants and jacket (for cool winds)

____ Water bottle or camel back (recommended) **We insist that you carry your own hard water bottle and top up from the supplied mineral bottles. This ensures no contamination to the plastic bottles and they can be shared around the group easier. It also prevents waste as many plastic bottles are identical, and once open they are abandoned by users!*

OTHER RECOMMENDED ITEMS:

____ Good hiking socks (eg "blister-free" type). Blister kit (compeeds or gaffa tape!).

____ Extra pair of shoes to wear like sandals or trainers for evening and post trek

____ Trekking clothing – loose fitting, quick dry, warm light layers, good socks and spares

____ Loose, comfortable wear for evenings (non formal) that is warm yet light to carry

____ Sun hat that is broad and radiation proof

____ Binoculars (optional but can be useful)

____ Toiletries (soap, shampoo, etc PHOSPHATE FREE please), sun block, lip protection and toilet tissues

____ Pocket knife or multi tool

____ Camera / batteries ** NOTE recharging phones & tablets is difficult and limited for 2-3 days on this expedition unless you have a back up battery charger or reliable solar charger or similar*

____ French phrase book, ziplock and bin bags for waterproofing, duck tape and a small flask of your favourite tippie!