

Atlas to Sahara

MOROCCO



An Adventure by
NOMA TRAILS

ATLAS TO SAHARA:

A Runner's Journey Through Time in Morocco



NOMA
TRAILS

The Vibe & The Promise

This adventure was born from a chance encounter that felt like finding a winning lottery ticket. When we first visited Morocco with our family, we randomly met Abdu, who came to our aid and opened his world to us. This trip is the direct result of that friendship. It is an open door into the universe of our friend and guide, Abdu Oukioud, and his Berber community.

This is not a tour; this is time travel. For one week, we leave the 21st century behind and become Berbers, following ancient mule paths from the snow-dusted peaks of the High Atlas Mountains to the endless, rolling dunes of the Sahara Desert. We will drink tea in their homes, eat their food, and admire their remarkable way of life. Be prepared to be off-the-grid, but in return, you will connect with a culture, a landscape, and a group of like-minded runners in a way that is raw, real, and utterly unforgettable.

"I did Atlas to Sahara in November 2018 and had the best time!!! It's an adventure like no other... way better than anything I have imagined. If you are looking to experience the country as a local, push your physical and mental limits, while enjoying the rugged beauty of this country and its people, this is for you."

— Oxana Cherevchenko, Australia





Meet your guides

Abdu Oukioud & Pablo Rodriguez



Abdu

Salam! Welcome to my home. I was raised as a Berber in these mountains, and it is my life's passion to share the true Morocco with visitors. This journey follows the paths of my ancestors. As a former competitive runner and the winner of the Wanderlust World Guide Awards Bronze medal in 2018, it is my honor to show you a world of incredible hospitality and rugged beauty that few outsiders ever get to see.

Pablo

The first time I ran here with Abdu, it changed my perspective on what an adventure could be. This trip it's about the connection to people. Abdu is more than a guide; he is the "king of Morocco," a friend who opens the door to his universe for us. Together, we will guide you on a physical and cultural journey that will stay with you forever. After 10 years now I speak amazigh and our oldest kid is bereber.

The NOMA Philosophy: Why We Run Here

This trip is the definition of serendipity. It wasn't planned; it was discovered through a chance meeting and an act of kindness. Our connection to this land is through our connection to Abdu and his community.

We run here not as tourists, but as invited guests, following paths that are not on any map but are etched into the hearts of the Berber people.

And the circle was closed when in Spain we met Driss, a kid from the village we run through, who made our family grow from six to seven and let us call Morocco home.

“ This is a journey built on friendship and respect.



A Day-by-Day Itinerary

The journey

Day 1. Arrival & Briefing

Arrive in Marrakesh and settle into your hotel. In the evening, you will meet your guides, Pablo and Abdu, for a full trip briefing before we immerse ourselves in the magic of the city with a group dinner at the famous Jemaa el-Fna square.

Day 2. Going East Instead of South

We leave the city bustle behind, driving east into the mountains. Our first stop is for a traditional Berber lunch at the family home of our guide, Abdu. This is your first taste of true Moroccan hospitality. Afterwards, we drive to our starting point in the "Happy People Valley" for a short acclimatization run through villages of mud houses and straw roofs.

Day 3: Snow in Morocco?

After a Moroccan breakfast, we begin our first longest day of running. The main objective is the Tizi'n'Timit pass at 2901m. Depending on the time of year, we may encounter snow sections near the top, a surprising sight in Africa. The effort of the climb is rewarded with a long, exhilarating descent into a valley that transforms from high mountain terrain into a desert oasis.

Day 4: Through the Berber Villages and Into the Canyon

Today we run through an extremely remote valley, a place where people live a traditional, independent life, seemingly untouched by time. We will be running through, and sometimes in, the M'Goun canyon, wading through icy river water. Waterproof socks are a novelty that you will appreciate today! This is a day of river and canyon running, with some sections on narrow irrigation channels that demand full concentration.

Our six days expedition is a point-to-point traverse from the heart of the Atlas mountains south to the Sahara desert. The landscape, culture, and challenge evolve each day, creating an epic narrative of discovery.

Day 5: Making It Out of the Atlas

Our route takes us out of the narrow canyon and back into a landscape of fields and larger villages. We'll tackle a final mountain climb to get a stunning panorama of the Berber villages we've just passed through. We spend the night at Hussein's place, a comfortable hotel in a local village, with a free evening to rest or explore on your own.

Day 6: First Day in the Sahara

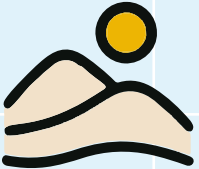
We trade the mountains for the desert. A 4.5-hour drive takes us south towards the iconic orange dunes of the Sahara. Our run today is a short but explosive and intensive 10 kilometers over the sand to reach our camp, nestled in the middle of the Merzouga Dunes. The day may end with a sandstorm, a true desert experience where a buff and sunglasses become necessities.

Day 7: We Go Full Sahara Mode

Long before dawn, we set out for our most profound run of the week. Guided by Abdu and the spectacular Milky Way, we will navigate the silent dunes and witness the sun rise over the Sahara - a true life moment. After finishing, we will be transferred to Ait Ben Haddou to spend the night.

Day 8: Departure

After a final desert sunrise and breakfast, we begin the transfer back towards Marrakesh, full of memories of an incredible journey through time.

	Run title / Focus	Distance	Elevation	Key Highlights & Experiences	Overnight Location
Day 1	Arrival & Briefing 			Arrive in Marrakesh, meet the team for dinner and a full expedition briefing.	 Marrakesh
Day 2	Into the Happy People Valley 	10 km	Acclimatization	Drive from Marrakesh; Berber lunch at Abdu's family home; acclimatization run.	 Azilal Area
Day 3	Snow in Morocco?	29 km	Significant Ascent +1410 m	Ascend Tizi'n'Timit pass (2901m), possibly with snow; descend into a desert oasis valley.	 Remote Gite
Day 4	Through the Berber Canyons 	24 km	River Running	Run through an extremely remote canyon, wading through rivers and meeting.	 Remote Gite
Day 5	Making It Out of the Atlas	21 km	Mountain Views	Exit the canyon, climb for panoramic views of Berber villages. Free evening to explore.	 Village Hotel (Hussein's Place)
Day 6	First Day in the Sahara 	10 km	Explosive & Intense	Drive towards the desert; an intense 10km run over dunes to reach our remote desert camp.	 Merzouga Dunes Camp
Day 7	Full Sahara Mode 	Varies	Dune Running	Run south through the high Merzouga Dunes towards the Algerian border. Stargazing.	 Merzouga Dunes Camp
Day 8	Departure			Morning transfer back towards Marrakesh.	Adventure Concludes

The Logistics

Plan your adventure

At-a-Glance

Price: 1900€

Dates: March and November

Group Size: Limited to 14 runners and 4 expedition leaders for an authentic experience.

What's Included

- ✓ All accommodation for 8 nights
- ✓ All breakfasts, some lunches and all dinners (except arrival day)
- ✓ All transfers, including from/to Marrakesh
- ✓ Daily luggage transportation
- ✓ Expert guiding by Abdu Oukioud and Pablo Rodriguez

What's Not Included

- ✗ Dinner on arrival day
- ✗ Lunches on Day 5, 6, and 7
- ✗ Personal travel and medical insurance (compulsory)
- ✗ Tips for your guides and support crew
- ✗ Drinks and items of a personal nature
- ✗ Flights or travel to the meeting point in Marrakesh

Accommodation: The Real Experience

This is an immersion in Berber culture. For two nights, we will stay in basic, traditional guesthouses (gites) that are clean and welcoming but simple by Western standards. Other nights are in comfortable local hotels and one unforgettable night in a desert camp under the stars.

Be prepared to be off-the-grid and embrace the "time-travel" experience; while hot water is almost always available, the joy of this trip is disconnecting from modern luxuries like wifi and connecting with the remote landscape.

The Running Experience: Pace, Terrain, and Vibe

This is a challenging adventure. Four of the six running days are "half-marathon plus" in distance, often on technical terrain with significant elevation change or unique challenges like river crossings and sand dunes. This is not a race; we move as a group, supporting each other and having 4 guides let us accommodate different paces. The terrain is incredibly varied, from high-altitude mountain passes to wading through canyons and the unique challenge of running on deep Sahara sand.



A Taste of the Region

The culinary journey

You will eat as the Berbers do. Expect delicious, home-cooked meals like tagine (a slow-cooked stew) and couscous, fresh-baked bread, and endless glasses of sweet mint tea, which is central to Moroccan hospitality. Food is a communal, celebratory experience, often accompanied by music and stories. For on-trail fuel, please bring your own preferred energy bars and snacks.



Know before you go

Essential travel info

Currency:

Moroccan Dirham (MAD). It's advisable to have cash, especially in the remote villages.

Language:

The official languages are Arabic and Berber. French is also widely spoken.

- **Hello: Salam**
- **Thank you: Shukran**

Cultural Etiquette:

Dress modestly, especially when visiting villages. Always ask for permission before taking photos of people.

Insurance:

Comprehensive travel and medical insurance is compulsory for this trip.



Essential Gear & Packing List

On the trail

Footwear:

Trail running shoes are a must.

Socks:

Waterproof socks are strongly advised for the canyon running day.

Pack:

A running vest/pack to carry water, snacks, layers, and sun protection.

Layers:

Layers are key. You'll need warm gear (fleece, warm hat, gloves) for cold nights and high altitudes in the Atlas, and light, sun-protective clothing for the desert.

Protection:

A buff or scarf for sandstorms is essential, along with high-factor sunscreen and sunglasses.

Lighting:

A headlamp is necessary for evenings in the gites and desert camp.

off the trail

Luggage:

One primary piece of luggage per person.

Clothing:

Comfortable, casual clothes for the evenings.

Personal:

Any personal medications, blister plasters, and a small first-aid kit.



Voices from the Trail

"The trip was filled with hours of running through the Atlas Mountains, beautiful Berber villages, incredible rivers and gorges, and of course the majestic Sahara desert. We ate our way through all the tagine, couscous, dates, and oranges... What a privilege it is to be able to travel, to run, and to make friends across the world."

— Stefanie Schwemlein, Germany

"A trip of a lifetime! Costa Rica was much more challenging for those keeping score, but Morocco stole my heart with its beauty. Pablo and his group were fabulous with excellent local knowledge... Abdu is the king of Morocco and one of the best guides you'll meet in the world."

— Rick Ostroff, USA

"Takes you to unique places with like-minded, easy-going people. Great itinerary and great guides. Hard to fault anything, and [they] managed the group of varying abilities (including me) extremely well."

— Derek Hunter, UK





Your next step: **JOIN THE TRIBE**

*Ready to step back in time and experience
the raw beauty and incredible hospitality of
Morocco?*

Spaces are strictly limited for this expedition.
Secure your spot today.

Have questions?

Visit our website for FAQs or email us directly at
info@nomatrails.com

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