



#### TRIP ITINERARY

**MOROCCO: THE DIRT MERCHANT**

**TYPE: XC**

**A BACKCOUNTRY XC ADVENTURE – 10 DAYS, 9 NIGHTS.**

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#### TRIP DETAILS

*An epic ride supported by Land Rovers and local guides that speak Arab, French, English and some Berber. Unique hotels and a night under the stars in a Berber tent camp. Great trails in a very beautiful land... a remote and cultural mountain bike trip of a lifetime.*

#### 2010 DATES

*Sunday, September 19 to Tuesday, September 28*

#### 2010 LAND COST

*TBD*

#### SINGLE SUPPLEMENT *TBD*

#### 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 smorgasbord 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, well maybe not dance actually. 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).

***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.

*Big Mountain reserves the right to make alterations and substitutions to the itinerary as weather or terrain conditions dictate or as necessary to improve the trip quality or to accommodate the comfort, convenience, and well-being of our guests.*

### **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 riad, centrally located in the famous Medina of Marrakech, just 5 minute walk from the focal point of the city, the remarkable central square of the Djemaa-el-Fna. Stay in our Marrakech riad.

### **DAY 2 – EXPLORE MARRAKECH**

Today is a great day to explore the Medina, its 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. Stay in our Marrakech riad.

### **DAY 3 – RIDE TO D'AIT OURIR: 50 KM (31 MILES)**

This morning we transfer out of Marrakech with our bikes loaded on the roof to the mountains of the Atlas Range, north Africa's highest peaks. Today's ride is in a spectacular dry mountain setting. Total distance 50 km (31 miles) with 600 meters (2000 feet) of vertical climbing and 600 meters (2000 feet) of descent. Tonight, we stay at an auberge nestled in the mountains.

### **DAY 4 – TICHKA PASS: 40 KM (24 MILES)**

Load up the Land Rovers and transfer an hour to the Tichka Pass (2260 meters) where we start the ride. Today ride is in a remote big mountain area on singletrack and where no trails exist. Total distance 40 km (25 miles) with 1100 meters (3600 feet) of vertical climbing and 1800 meters (5900 feet) of descending. Tonight, we stay at the same auberge as the previous night.

### **DAY 5 – RIDE TO OURIKA VALLEY: 55 KM (34 MILES)**

Today's ride is on beautiful singletrack through red mountains, reminiscent of parts of south-western USA. Of course, when you roll into a Berber town you'll feel like you are in a National Geographic issue. Total distance 55 km (34 miles) with 1200 meters (3937 feet) of vertical climbing. Tonight we stay in an auberge in the beautiful Ourika Valley.

### **DAY 6 – RIDE TO THE MOON: 50 KM (31 MILES)**

Right from the door of the hotel we begin a gentle 20 km (12 mile) climb to a spectacular descent on a super trail on grey rock in a moonscape. Total distance 50 km (31 miles) with 900 meters (2952 feet) of climbing and an equal amount of descending. Tonight we stay in an auberge in the beautiful Ourika Valley.

### **DAY 7 – RIDE TO D'AMANAR: 45 KM (27 MILES)**

After a shuttle to the start of our ride at 1700 meters (5577 feet), we head out for arguably the best day of the trip on sweet singletrack to our own private Berber tent camp. Don't worry, it's a luxury camp with more comforts than you could imagine. Total distance 45 kilometers (28 miles) with 600 meters (2000 feet) of climbing and 1200 meters (3937 feet) of descending. Tonight we stay at a luxury Berber tent camp.

**DAY 8 – RIDE TO OUIRGANE: 50 KM (31 MILES)**

Today's ride takes through several valleys on rolling singletrack with sections of playful trail and sights and sounds from another world. Total distance 50 km (31 miles) with 800 meters (2625 feet) of climbing and 900 meters (2955 feet) of descending. Tonight we lay our heads down at our auberge in the village of Ouirgane.

**DAY 9 – BACK TO MARRAKECH**

This morning you can either come along on an early morning ride along the numerous singletrack trails that link up the small villages in the Ouirgane Valley or relax and 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!

**DAY 10 – FLY HOME**

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

## DETAILS

### LAND COST

\$TBD

Single supplement: \$TBD. Available on all but 1 night.  
Bike rental available: \$TBD (Kona Dawg or Kona One20)

### MAX GROUP SIZE: 12

### WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Expert Local Leadership
- Accommodation in hotels and 1 night in tented camp
- All meals
- Airport pick-up and all transportation
- Detailed pre-departure information, trip extension assistance and 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. On most days participants can ride in the Land Rovers if they need a break.

### BIKE AND EQUIPMENT

The perfect bike for The Dirt Merchant is a light weight XC bike. 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

We believe in choosing comfortable accommodation with character with views unparalleled – on this trip we'll lay our heads in a variety of abodes, from a 4-star riad in Marrakech to cosy hotels in the country to a luxury tent camp. 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 celsius 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@ridebig.com) if you have any questions. We are here to help!

## **CONTACT US**

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