Morocco remains exotic and unknown to most Americans, despite Bogie and Bergman in *Casablanca*, and the Moroccan works of Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, and Edith Wharton. As an exciting hiking destination with mild, dry weather in February and March, we are offering twelve people the opportunity to experience some of Morocco’s most spectacular scenery on this 17-day trip. Trekking across the Anti-Atlas Mountains will cover 90 miles in eight days. Mules will carry our gear, and muleteers will set up our tents and cook the food, while we carry day packs. We will trek through rocky passes and canyons with wide-open expansive views, fantastic rock formations, remote Berber villages, friendly locals, black starlit nights and authentic Moroccan food.

The Anti-Atlas range stretches west-southwest to east-northeast between the higher Atlas range to the north and the Sahara Desert to the south. We will travel by minibus across the High Atlas from Marrakesh and the trailheads. The trails are in good condition with occasional rough areas. Before the trek, we spend 2 nights as more conventional tourists in legendary Marrakesh. Near the end of our trip, we will spend 3 relaxing days in Essaouira, walking among its 18th century military fort, gently atmospheric streets, a windy beach, and a 20km camel ride. We will return to Marrakesh for one night before our flight home.
MOROCCO

Morocco and the USA established formal diplomatic relations in 1787 when they signed a treaty of Peace and Friendship, which is still in force—the longest unbroken treaty relationship in US history. Arabic is the official language, French is the language of business and government, and several Berber dialects are commonly spoken. English is common among youth, as it is taught in all public schools starting at the 4th grade. Our guide will speak heavily-accented English.

Relations between the Muslim world and the United States have relatively suddenly and recently become very important to us. Much of the Muslim world is very foreign to Americans. Even in Morocco, which is more open to outside influences than many of the better known Muslim countries much farther east, we will rarely forget we are in a substantially different culture. This trip, while too brief to make any of us experts in the issues between the two cultures, offers a fine opportunity to gain a deeper understanding. Needless to say, our 17 day sojourn in Morocco’s mild climate will also provide a pleasant respite from our own winter.

ITINERARY

When dealing with any significantly different culture, it’s wise to maintain flexibility and a go-with-the-flow attitude for your and the group’s maximum enjoyment.

**Friday Feb 19** – Depart the U.S. for Marrakesh.

**Saturday Feb 20** – Morning arrival in Marrakesh, the “Red City” or Al Hamra. After settling into our hotel, we will have a bit of time to explore. The bustling city square *Djemaa el Fna* is only a minute away, and the country’s largest traditional *souk* (market) begins on the opposite side of the square. We will have a welcome dinner. (D)

**Sunday Feb 21** – After breakfast, we will go on a locally guided city tour. Lunch, will be on your own. In addition to the souk, there are palaces and museums to explore. (B/D)

**Monday Feb 22** – After breakfast, we drive to Ouarzazate, stop for lunch, and continue to Draa Valley and Tansikht Camp, where we spend the night (6 ½ hrs drive, 185 mi). (B/L/D)

**Tuesday Feb 23** – Trek Day 1 in Tangarfa Valley to Oasis Agouram Camp (12.5 mi, 650’ gain, 6 hrs). (B/L/D)

**Wednesday Feb 24** – Trek Day 2 to Izoukrane Valley Camp (12.5 mi, 2,300’ gain/985’ loss, 6 ½ hrs). (B/L/D).
Thursday Feb 25 – Trek Day 3 to Tagmoute, Ifrane Oussaka Camp over Tagmoute pass 1900 m (13 mi, 2,625’ gain/1,310’ loss, 7 hrs). (B/L/D)

Friday Feb 26 – Trek Day 4 to Tajalajt and then to Tifdassine Camp (10.5 mi, 165’ gain/985’ loss, 5 ½ hrs.) (B/L/D)

Saturday Feb 27 – Trek Day 5 to Irhazzoune, then to Bab n Ali Camp (10.5 mi, 820’ gain/490’ loss, 6 hrs). (B/L/D)

Sunday Feb 28 – Trek Day 6 to Afourar Valley and then Oasis Iggli and Aouragh Camp (10 mi, 1,640’ gain/330’ loss, 6 hrs). (B/L/D)

Monday March 1 – Trek Day 7 to summit Kouaoutch 2600 m and then down to Imin Ouarg Camp 1900m (11 mi, 2,300’ gain/2,950’ loss, 7 hrs). (B/L/D)

Tuesday March 2 – Trek Day 8 to Allili Oasis for lunch (7.5 mi, 330’ gain/985’ loss, 4 hrs) and then private minibus drive to Dades and Roses Valley, Skoura and night at a hotel in Ouarzazate (2 hr drive, 93 mi). (B/L/D)

Wednesday March 3 – Private minibus drive to Essaouira via Marrakesh (6.5 hrs drive, 233 mi). (B/L/D)

Thursday March 4 – After breakfast, half day guided Camel ride from Sidi Kaouki beach, 12.5 miles south of Essaouira including a picnic. Free afternoon and evening on your own. (B/L)

Friday March 5 – After breakfast, free day to explore Essaouira and the surrounding area. (B)

Saturday March 6 – Mid morning departure, via minibus, to Marrakesh. Lunch along the way and farewell dinner included (3 hrs drive, 124 mi. (B/L/D)

Sunday, March 7 – Airport transfer for your flight back home or continue your travels on your own. (B)
EXPERIENCE AND RISKS

The terrain is gentler than the high mountains of the Northeast U.S. The trails are generally good, less because they are well maintained than because they don’t have to deal with a lot of precipitation. The altitude on our route will briefly get up over 7,000 feet, but there are few extended steep stretches. Mules will carry everything for us except day packs.

However, the length of this trek does mean that we will be away from civilization for nine days, hiking 90 or so miles over eight of them. That’s an average of 11 miles a day, in 5-7 hours, in a very dry and generally rocky environment. The combination of physical exertion and dry air will require that we pace ourselves and pay close attention to hydration and proper nutrition.

People wishing to participate in this trip must have previous hiking experience, at the intermediate level or higher. Although the hiking will be at a moderate pace, this is not a trip for a beginner, for someone who has not hiked in the last several years, for someone who has never hiked several consecutive days, or for someone who is not already in shape at the time we leave the U.S.

On the trek, we will be away from cities, towns, vehicles, paved roads, hospitals and doctors. Emergency and specialized medical care in Morocco is generally below U.S. standards, especially outside the major cities, and in the backcountry will not be immediately available at all. The leaders have taken Wilderness First Aid and CPR courses, and will carry a first-aid kit, but are not health care professionals. Should someone require evacuation due to injury or illness, the mules supporting our expedition will be available to transport that person to the nearest track passable by a 4-wheel drive vehicle. Our guide will have a cell phone to make arrangements for a 4-wheel drive vehicle to meet an evacuee at the nearest point on a dirt track. From there, it may still be several hours to a doctor, and longer to a hospital. Helicopter evacuation may be possible, but we cannot count on it.

We will probably face over-zealous salesmanship when we venture into the souks in Marrakesh. Panhandling and pick-pocketing are only minor concerns, and only in urban areas, where we will be for a small part of our trip. You are encouraged to be careful and aware of your surroundings at all times. Traffic accidents are a hazard in Morocco; road conditions are poor in some areas. We will be driven by professional drivers; we do NOT plan to rent or drive any vehicles.
When you participate in this activity, you should be both physically and mentally prepared, and equipped with the appropriate gear. You should be in good physical shape and be prepared for hiking days of up to 12 miles, and for the rigors of camping. At meals during the trek, everyone will sit on the ground, on large mats provided by the crew. The terrain is mostly dry and often barren; on the trek, we will rarely see much green or trees. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities.

**WOMEN IN MOROCCO**

Moroccans are accustomed to people from Western cultures, but as visitors we must be respectful of local traditions and cultural norms. It is best not to draw attention to yourself, and to make some effort to conform to the local cultural expectations for foreigners. Modest dress, loose clothing and covered shoulders are most appropriate. Tight or short pants and low-cut or sleeveless tops are not appropriate and may encourage unwanted attention. During the trek, shorts and short-sleeved shirts are acceptable. In the cities, slacks or a skirt and longer sleeves are recommended. A scarf can be useful for covering head and shoulders.

**GROUP INFORMATION**

**Group Size**

We will limit the group to twelve participants and two leaders. We find this size makes for a good balance between camaraderie and pragmatism.

**Expectations**

This trip is designed so that everyone may experience our adventure in Morocco through shared participation in activities and tasks in an organized group environment. AMC travelers are known for their cooperative efforts, and expectations are that all participants will be considerate of others sharing this AMC Adventure Travel experience.

While camp duties are almost eliminated by our having a support crew, it’s important that we be respectful of our crew and fulfill the obligations we have to them, such as being neat with used dishes and utensils, and packing up our gear in a timely fashion in the morning. Additionally, participants are expected to offer the leaders and their fellow participant’s assistance when it’s appropriate. If possible, we will try to plan one pre-trip get-together so we can begin to get acquainted with each other here at home. We will do everything possible to create a friendly atmosphere throughout the trip so that participants can focus on enjoying the scenery and the experience. We encourage each participant to let us know how the group dynamics are working for him or her throughout the trip. Both leaders have led many fun,
relaxed trips in the past, and intend to make this trip another success. First and foremost, we aim to experience Morocco enjoyably and safely!

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of safety, whether it will be of the group or of the individual. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant’s being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

**ACCOMODATIONS**

We will stay in simple and inexpensive hotels or riads. They are unlikely to resemble places you have stayed at in the U.S. In Marrakesh, we will stay in a riad, in a location that is convenient; it is within walking distance of the Djemaa El Fna, the central “square” in the old city. In Essaouira, we will stay in a riad or hotel, where breakfast and sometimes dinner will be included.

While on the trek, we will share two-person, A-frame backpacking tents. The crew will set them up before we arrive at each night’s campsite, and take them down in the morning. The crew will also erect two large square canvas tents with center and corner poles, one for our use for meals and hanging out, and the other for food preparation, and a third, small toilet tent.

**LEADERS’ RIGHT TO CHANGE ITINERARY**

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

**TYING TRIP TO AMC MISSION**

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run in a manner supportive of and consistent with the conservation, recreational and educational principles and mission of the Club. Trip leaders encourage participant conduct consistent with Leave No Trace environmental and conservation principles and local regulations.
AIR AND TRAVEL
The leaders will assist you in making airline reservations and provide the itinerary that you should book to arrive on time. Plan to arrive in Marrakesh on February 20, 2021. We suggest you arrive as early as possible to have a bit of time to rest and see Marrakesh and join the group for our welcome dinner. Our trip ends on March 7 so that your flight home should be no earlier than that Sunday morning at 10 am from Marrakesh Airport (RAK).

COST
The cost for the trip is $2,000 for AMC members and $2,100 for non-AMC members plus airfare (est. $850 - $1,000). This price is based on quotes at the time this trip was proposed in September of 2019. This price covers the following:
- Accommodations for three nights in Marrakesh, one night in Ouarzazate and three nights in Essaouira
- All meals listed in the itinerary
- Fully supported trek, which includes all meals, support crew, and mules.
- Tent accommodations on the trek.
- Potable drinking water on the trek.
- All ground transportation via minibus pre-arranged for the group, including airport transfers, depending on your flight plans
- AMC Adventure Travel overhead rate of 20% on all land arrangements.
- Evacuation and repatriation insurance required by the AMC.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED
- Round trip airfare to Morocco
- Alcohol and personal items
- Meals not included in the itinerary and trail snacks
- Trip cancellation insurance
Please be aware that, in accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing some of the leaders’ costs. Beyond this and in accordance with AMC rules, the leaders may not realize a profit from this excursion. The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, trip cancellation, or loss of baggage. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters. These letters will be sent out by the leaders once we have received our minimum number of qualified applicants.

Given current trends with fuel costs and with the value of the US dollar, this cost estimate of $2,000 is conservative, and includes a reasonable contingency for unpredictable costs. After the trip, and after all expenses have been paid, any remaining trip funds will be refunded to the participants. A refund of excess payments appears much more likely than any request for additional payment.

**WHAT’S NEXT**
If you have any questions, please contact us so we can discuss them. Samir’s cell phone is 978-270-0714. You can reach Brian at 413-221-2149. Please feel free to call before 9 PM.

After you have reviewed this prospectus, if you want to apply to join us, please let us know by e-mail to sam5670@yahoo.com AND btausend1@gmail.com. One of us will send you the application materials, consisting of a Participant Application, a Confidential Health Questionnaire, and an Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release form. Please complete all three forms, and sign and return them with a deposit check of $1,000, payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club. Please mail it to the address listed on the application form. The final balance of $1,000 is due October 1, 2020.

To be offered a spot on the trip, the leaders must determine that you and the trip are a good match, a process that may require a telephone conversation with you and reference checks. Your check will not be deposited unless we offer you a spot on this trip. If you are accepted from a waiting list, we will not deposit your check unless you confirm that you are still interested.
When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses and phone numbers of those going on the trip. We will be using e-mail as our primary method of communication. We will try to arrange a pre-trip gathering so that we can start getting acquainted before we head to Morocco.

**CANCELLATION**

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Our published minimum penalty schedule is zero if canceled before August 1, 2020, $300 in between August 1, 2020 through September 30, and $600 afterwards. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

Cancellation refunds will not be paid until after the trip has been completed. Cancellations are considered effective when a leader receives written notification. When a canceling participant cannot be replaced, he/she may forfeit as much as the entire trip fee.

Nobody's cancellation will be allowed to raise costs for others. If cancellation occurs after November 1, 2020 refunds will be made if suitable replacement is found.

**SAFETY**

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events, procedures and policies have been developed to attempt to limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with volunteer leaders to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips and camps, and transportation in vehicles, on foot, or on a bike. When you apply for acceptance onto a trip, please carefully read and sign the Adventure Travel Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement and call if you have any questions.
TRIP LEADERS

Samir Patel, Leader: Samir first became a member of AMC in 1992. He leads for the Boston Chapter’s hiking/backpacking committee. He has traveled to many parts of the world with AMC Adventure Travel, including New Zealand (x2), the Dolomites in Italy, Patagonia, Japan, Mexico, Canadian Rockies, Ireland, Alaska, and many national parks in the U.S. and abroad. He is certified for Wilderness First Aid via NOLS, and CPR via American Red Cross.

Brian Tausendfreund, Leader: Brian is a four-season trip leader and instructor for the AMC NH Chapter. He has completed numerous rounds of the NH 48, including in winter, and has led trips to each of the NE 67 summits. He has co-led a "Tour of Mont Blanc" Adventure Travel trip in 2018 and a trip to Luxembourg in 2019. He has hiked in the high peaks in California and the beautiful canyons of Utah. He also travels frequently in Europe. Brian is certified in Wilderness First Aid via SOLO, and CPR via American Heart Association.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Here is a list of the required and recommended gear for the trip, as well as a list of items which some people will bring and share. If your personal equipment philosophy is different in significant ways, please consult with the leaders.

Required and Essential Gear

- broken-in hiking boots (preferably above ankle)
- rain and wind protection gear
- synthetic pile/fleece jacket, or wool sweater
- non-cotton shorts (or long pants if you prefer) and shirt for hiking
- at least 2-3 sets of hiking socks with liners
- long underwear top and bottom
- polypropylene, Coolmax, Bergelene or other synthetic extra layer clothing
- hat for warmth, and gloves or mittens (it may get cool at night)
- comfortable clothing for evenings and in town (discrete, ie shoulders covered, no shorts)
- soft pack or duffle big enough all your personal clothing and gear, and suitable for tying to the back of a mule!
- small bag for any travel clothing and gear you leave in Marrakesh during the trek.
- daypack large enough to carry at least 2 quarts/liters of water, sun hat, flashlight/headlamp, personal gear, etc.
- at least 2 quart/liter water bottles or equivalent hydration system
• waterproof pack cover, or garbage bags for pack liner
• 30-degree sleeping bag
• a lightweight flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
• toilet paper and extra ziplock bags to pack it out after use
• personal toiletries and prescription medications
• pack towel
• hat, visor, sunglasses, sunscreen, and/or bandana for sun protection
• liquid hand gel

**Recommended or Optional Gear**
• hiking poles
• personal first aid kit with moleskin, personal meds, etc. (leaders will have group first aid kit)
• whistle
• small knife
• high-energy trail snacks (don’t count on getting your preferred snacks in Morocco)
• pillowcase (to stuff clothes in) or small pillow
• sleeping pad to supplement what the crew provides
• sandals and/or sneakers for towns and time off the trail
• bathing suit
• earplugs
• binoculars or spotting scope
• insect repellent
• moisturizing eye drops
• medications such as Imodium for digestive problems
• camera, batteries, & charger
• field guides
• field notebook and pencil (waterproof or in ziplock bag)