

HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL 2024 ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

Report from:

‘Life is Not an X Box – 2023 Morocco Adventure

Another ten days of proper adventure!

A team of 24 young people aged between 15 and 19, with adult leaders, set off in the very early morning to Gatwick airport. All smartly identifiable in our distinctive team shirts issued at our team building and final briefing day in July, we occupied quite a large section of the Easyjet flight to Marrakech.

Our friends and guides, Jamal and Omar met us at Marrakech airport and, in two minibuses, we drove to the Riad Omar, our hotel for the first and last night.

Omar, our city guide, took us all on a tour of the tanneries, medina, souks and bazaars. We had to delay the tour from 2pm to 4pm when the temperature was a more acceptable 40 degrees C !!

The main square is 200 yards from our Riad and is now a UNESCO Heritage site. Snake charmers, story tellers, jugglers, henna ladies, noise, colour and not a Waitrose in sight! A very different world and clearly not the start of a holiday with mum and dad, nor a school trip!

The following day we travelled in our minibuses to Imlil, a small town in the Atlas mountains some 70 miles from Marrakech. A journey about two hours but a lifetime in difference. We stayed at the Riad Atlas Toubkal, our home for seven days. We had the whole of the riad to ourselves, up on the hillside above the village centre.

Trekking was a wonderful way to see the wild nature of this part of the world and experience the fantastic hospitality of the local Berber people in their shops and villages. The local children were so excited to see the team. They knew we were in town because we always wear our team shirts on arrival.

We trek every day and the memorable trek to Sidi Chamharouch was long, hot and tough. Really wild and mountainous country accessed along a dry river bed then rising to narrow trails. A refreshing dip in the mountain stream was welcome before setting off back to Imlil.

All treks are accompanied by a couple of mules who carry our lunch and water for the afternoon and are available for anyone feeling poorly or just want the experience of riding in the mountains. We also have a camel trek which is quite an experience. Best to hang on!

Our annual trek to Tamatert saw us lunch in the village and then, highlight of the trip, a couple of hours spent with 15 or 20 young village children. We always take useful gifts for them and enjoy playing and demonstrating whatever we have brought along.

I am proud to tell you that the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme has validated our adventure as being appropriate for the Gold Award, for which I am an examiner.

All those in the team pay for their own air fare plus hold luggage and travel insurance. It's proper adventure where you make decisions, be in a team, grow as a person and immerse yourself in a different culture and environment.

Everyone was enriched by the experience of this adventure and individual challenge and know that none of this was possible without support from our sponsors. Generous individuals, High Halden Parish Council, Ashford Borough Council and Councillor Alan Pickering as well as Gravity Global and the Peter Adams Trust. Your support is invaluable and not taken for granted.

The Morocco Adventure is up and running this year (2024)

There are a couple of vacancies for young people so if you are interested, or know someone who might be, get them to check the site out.

See our website www.lifeisnotanxbox.com for info, photos and video.

Contact details are there or direct to David Ball on d.a.ball@btinternet.com