

ABOUT THE TRAIL→ **DISTANCE** 69 km (42.9 mi)→ **DURATION** 5 to 6 days→ **TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN** 5,858 m (19,219 ft)→ **LEVEL** Moderate to challenging

The High Atlas Mountains stretch diagonally across Morocco, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the border of Algeria in the east. As the name suggests, they contain the Atlas Range's tallest peaks, including the mighty Jebel Toubkal at 4,167 m (13,671 ft), the highest mountain in the Arab world. In recognition of the range's imposing nature, they are referred to by the Berbers—the region's native inhabitants—as *Idraren Draren*, or “Mountains of Mountains.”

From a hiker's perspective, the High Atlas represents some of the finest trekking on the African continent. Walking the same trails locals have trodden for millennia, hikers are treated to a memorable combination of hidden passes, oasis valleys, snowcapped peaks, and panoramic ridges. Dotted among these impressive natural wonders are the ancient villages of the Berbers themselves. With their mud-brick houses and terraced fields, these tiny hamlets and the welcoming people that inhabit them are as much a part of trekking in the High Atlas as the majestic landscapes.

The Toubkal Circuit is Morocco's most renowned multiday trek. Beginning and ending in the bustling village of Imlil, during its 69 km (42.9 mi) course, it circumnavigates the Jebel Toubkal peak by way of a series of interconnected valleys and mountain passes. The trail itself is not always clear, and good navigation skills are required for those who choose to hike independently. Regarding the terrain, the climbs are often rocky, steep, and long, and outside of the sometimes scorching summer months, the higher sections are regularly covered in snow. By any criteria, the Toubkal Circuit is not a trail for beginners.

Setting out from Imlil, the path climbs gradually past barley fields and orchards on the way to Tizi n'Tamatert (2,279 m/7,477 ft), the first of the circuit's many passes. Continuing along dirt roads, a couple of hours after Tamatert, you'll reach the village of Tacheddirt (12 km/7.5 mi from Imlil), where many hikers choose to spend their first night on the trail. From Tacheddirt, the going gets considerably tougher and more scenic as you traverse the high passes of Tizi n'Likemt (3,545 m/11,631 ft) and Tizi n'Ououraine (3,113 m/10,213 ft) on your way to the characteristic village of Amsouzart (39 km/24.2 mi from Imlil). (Note: For those camping, one of the best sites on the circuit is at Azib Likemt, located one hour's descent from its namesake pass.)

Even if you're mostly sleeping outdoors during the circuit, plan on spending at least one night in Amsouzart. With its mud-brick buildings and lush riverside setting at the bottom of a deep valley, it's one of the most picturesque settlements in the Atlas Mountains. It also makes for a great spot to soak in the daily happenings of Berber life: village elders discussing recent events over mint tea, children splashing around in the river, or perhaps a local shepherd wandering through the main >



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← Ascending the Ait Mizane Valley between Imlil and the Toubkal Refuge.
↑ A mud-brick house edges a shady byway.