



WALKS AND SCRAMBLES IN THE MOROCCAN ANTI-ATLAS

A TRAVERSE OF THE NORTH-WESTERN ANTI-ATLAS – ONE WEEK TREK

Start	Ait Baha
Finish	Ait Mansour
Distance	110km
Ascent	5325m
Descent	4450m
Grade	Difficult
Time	7 days (39–46hr)
Map	A full set of the Oxford Alpine Club (OAC) 1:50,000 scale Mini Maps 1–5 is recommended in the guidebook. These were used for maps in both the guidebook and for all but the Stage 1 map in this supplement. These are still available but the whole of the trek is now also covered by 3 Ranger Series 1:50,000 scale waterproof maps. The scale is the same but the appearance may differ from those in the guidebook and this supplement. Additionally the 1:25,000 Adventure Series map has been extended to four maps which now cover Stages 1-6. The OAC Tourist Explorer Map 1 (1:150,000) is highly recommended for an overview and as a back-up in the event that any of the above maps become damaged, lost or otherwise unobtainable. The maps can be bought from www.oxfordalpineclub.co.uk .

Using this download

The layout of the text and maps in this download generally follows that used in the guidebook. GPX files have been created in the same way and should be used with the same precautions. Please note that the starting and finishing points provided in the route information box may be notional or approximate for some stages as choice of accommodation or campsite will dictate how the stages are split in practice. Also, please be aware that the mention of any campsite does not imply that it is the best location or will meet the expectations of all trekkers.

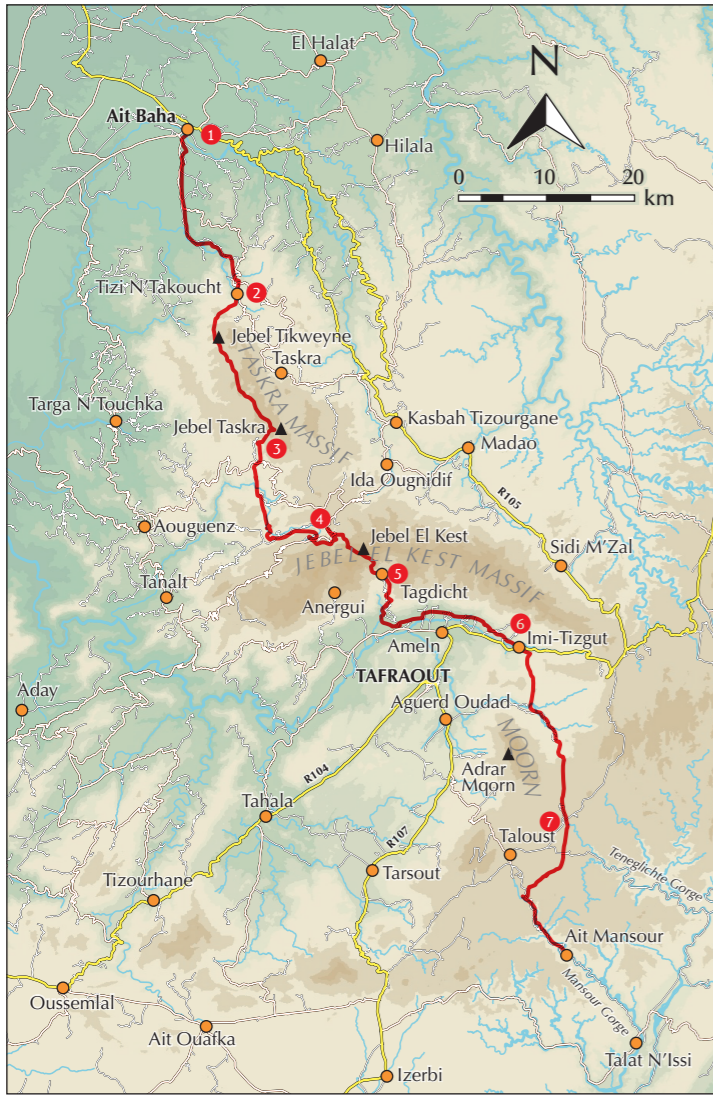
General overview

This trek has the makings of a classic adventure across the north-west Anti-Atlas. It could currently be described as 'exploratory' as it has not been previously documented and an uninterrupted traverse has not yet (2018) been made.

The description follows the line of least resistance from north to south incorporating accessible high ground and including the region's highest summit, Jebel El Kest (2375m). In its entirety it runs from Ait Baha through the Tamza (Samazar) Valley, over Jebel El Kest, along the Ameln Valley and across to the Ait Mansour or Teneglichte Gorges – a distance of approximately 110km. Alternative starting and finishing points are possible, allowing for a degree of flexibility and at least half of the route is composed of sections of other walks which are described in the guidebook.

Trekking companies and guides offer some of the central sections of the trek, but none to date has linked up a passage from the northern foothills to the dramatic gorges of the south-west. If you are looking for adventure and exploration you will find plenty of interest here as the route finds its way through some of most dramatic scenery in the Anti-Atlas.

With an average overall gradient of about 10% the trek is not overly strenuous and only demanding in parts, but the terrain is rugged, the waymarking is non-existent and the paths are often scant or not fully formed. Although the



trek is not always physically remote from human habitation there can be a feeling of remoteness. Good navigational skills, adequate preparation and a degree of self-sufficiency are essential prerequisites.

For all of the above reasons those who set out on the trek should be fit and able as there are no organised rescue services. In particular it would help to have some prior knowledge of this region of the Anti-Atlas. It would be unwise to undertake the trek alone unless you are very experienced and have a good support team.

Style and variations

There are several ways of making the traverse, depending on how fit and ambitious you are.

1 Trekkers who want to immerse themselves in the aesthetic experience of the region and/or on a limited budget will choose to start in Ait Baha and finish in Ait Mansour. Some may want to incorporate an extension by taking an extra day or so to explore the Ait Mansour Gorge or to walk around to the gite at Tiouadou in the Teneqlichte Gorge.

2 If you prefer not to camp and are very fit and acclimatised, may choose to take Stage 2 (Tizi N' Takoucht) as a starting point and combine Stages 2 and 3 (30km) and Stages 4 and 5 (25km) and possibly Stages 6 and 7 (35km). In order to be successful you would need to have cool conditions, very good endurance and some form of prior knowledge of the area, particularly the navigational obstacles. A support team providing transport to the start would be essential, and possibly for support along the way.



Looking south down the road from the Tagdicht Gateway at the start of Stage 5

- 3 If you have read the section on Jebel El Kest in the guidebook you may be curious about the possibility of continuing over the Ameln Summits. This could be linked with a traverse of the rim of the Tizi N'Tarakatine southern escarpment to descend into the Teneqlichte Gorge. Equally it would be possible to break the journey at Taфраout and take in Adrar Mqorn (reverse of Route 6) on the way to Ait Mansour. These variations are not recommended to the average trekker as the routes are more serious and suited to long-distance/endurance specialists who in addition to possessing good scrambling skills and navigational ability, will be highly self-reliant.

Main logistical considerations

Time of year and weather: In theory the trekking here has a wide window between late September and early May, although some may find either end of the period to be a little hot. The period from mid-November to late February sees the most rain and trekkers active in this period will need to be very well prepared. Mid-March to mid-April is a pleasant time in the Anti-Atlas, although it can still rain during these months. The high mountains and the plateaus of Jebel Taskra and Adrar Mqorn can be windswept and cold at night with temperatures below freezing. Note that the grading of each section may change according to weather conditions (see below).

Transport: The availability of reasonably priced public transport to the start and from the end of the trek allows it to be undertaken with a minimum of expense. A bus service runs from Agadir (see guidebook) and early morning grand taxis run from Ait Mansour. Those with two or more forms of transport can consider alternative starts or finishes.

Clothing and equipment: A list of what to take is provided in the guidebook. As noted above, the plateaus (Stages 2 and 7) can be cold even in springtime and adequate clothing and overnight equipment (three-season sleeping bag) should be taken. A lightweight (e.g. silk) sheet sleeping bag would prove useful in some of the auberges which only provide blankets. Also, the temperature variation during a week or even a day can be considerable (25C) so take something warm for the night time.

Ensure that any tent/bivi-bag can be zipped as a precautionary measure against lonely heat-seeking snakes, even though it might be unlikely (see <https://backpackinglight.com/forums/topic/85645/>). A very lightweight tarp may be of use where goats have been present and a pair of gardening gloves would be useful if you have to clear the ground of prickly vegetation to make a campsite. Remember to pack a head torch.

Accommodation: The contact details for gites are provided in the appendix to the guidebook. Unless alternatives are taken, wild camping is required in three locations. There are no particular restrictions on camping. The principal considerations are those that generally apply elsewhere, namely privacy and a level pitch. A watchful eye, a pair of gardening gloves and a sharp knife can transform a stony vegetated site into a reasonable night's stay.

Elsewhere accommodation and refreshments are available and are noted in the individual sections and in the appendix in the guidebook. There is usually availability but it would be wise to notify the auberges and gites of your likely arrival date. Your hotel or the tourist information office in Ait Baha (closed on Sundays) may be able to assist. In particular it would be wise to enquire about the status of Gite Takoucht which was undergoing renovation in 2017–2018 and may still be out of use.

Water and provisions: Water needs to be carried on most sections. Recent changes in water conservation practice have led to the installation of water meters in many places and previously free wells and roadside taps can no longer be relied upon. Water should be freely given if you ask at any house in a village. Water taken from streams should be filtered and treated.

Provisions can be bought in Ait Baha alongside anything else you might need. Mid-week markets may also sell camping gas cylinders and burner heads. Some villages have small shops or kiosks but their opening hours are variable.

Emergencies: There are no formal rescue services, although the police (Taфраout +212 (0) 528 800061) may be able to assist (see guidebook).

Carry a good first aid kit including improvised splinting materials. Be prepared to abandon the trek if any member of the party falls ill or acquires a wound that cannot be properly cleaned.

Mobile phone signal strength is often good except in narrow valleys. Therefore, think ahead about who to inform of your whereabouts and make sure you have sufficient data allowance and phone charge. Because of the expense of data roaming a dual sim or second mobile should be considered (local SIM cards should be available in Ait Baha).

Navigation: There are four aids to navigation.

- Text. The route descriptions provide guidance and the waypoint grid references can be translated onto the OAC sheet maps. The text will draw your attention in particular to complexities in route finding.
- Maps. The maps used in this download are sections from the Oxford Alpine Series Mini Maps 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. As noted above these have now been supplemented by Ranger Series and an extended Adventure Series (1:25,000 scale) maps. Try to buy the set prior to your departure.
- GPX files. These are available from Cicerone as described in the guidebook. They can be used in conjunction with your GPS. Viewranger maps can be downloaded prior to your departure and provide a degree of confirmation of your progress. Remember that screen glare, battery life, signal bounce, and satellite signal blocking can cause problems with navigational aids.

- Using your judgement. The Anti-Atlas provides good opportunities for on-sight navigation in that you can often see where you want to end up. Route finding can be more problematic in confined valleys or gorges. Please read the section on Navigation in the guidebook.

Safety considerations

The following provides an indication of the seriousness of the trek on a stage-by-stage basis using a four-point scale (low, medium, high, very high). The absence of an organised mountain rescue service means in reality that ‘low’ means ‘relatively low’. The following assumptions are made:

- The group consists of two or more people and has notified others of their plans. Travelling alone increases the risk by at least one additional level.
- The party is experienced, well equipped, in good health, fit and acclimatised and can cope with temperature variations. Sustained periods of hot weather may increase the risk of the trek, or sections of it, by one grade.
- A weather forecast indicating good weather has been obtained in advance.
- The group has in their possession this download, the guidebook, maps, compass, first aid kits, mobile phones and the navigational aids they normally use.
- On Stage 2 and Stage 4 the ability to solo scramble grade 1/2, although not essential, will help to access both summits quickly and will provide a margin of reserve elsewhere.

Seriousness of trek

Overall: High

Scale:

- **Low:** Normally the consequences of getting lost are not serious. It should be possible to summon assistance within the same day although serious consequences may result for those with heart failure or significant head or spinal injury.
- **Medium:** Errors with route finding or accidents in a remote area may lead to difficulties in obtaining help within the same day but the conditions for survival should be favourable.
- **High:** Remote and/or high summits which may require careful navigation in poor weather or visibility and where a heavy fall or injury could result in problems with summoning help within the same day.
- **Very High:** Remote and/or high summits requiring careful navigation in poor weather or visibility probably where the terrain demands a high degree of scrambling ability and where you are beyond the reach of assistance in the case of a fall or injury for a long period of time.

Stage 1: Low to Medium. Because this is mainly on unsurfaced roads (with some attention to navigation needed towards the end) the seriousness of this section is relatively low.

Stage 2: Medium to High. On leaving the village you will not pass through any settlements and you are unlikely to see anyone else, although there is one escape route.

Stage 3: Medium to High. From the campsite at the end of Stage 2 the decent to the road could be difficult in poor visibility. Otherwise some navigation challenges are presented during the first half of the day but there are escape routes.

Stage 4: High. Jebel El Kest is the highest mountain in the immediate area (over 7000ft). There are some navigational challenges and you may not see anyone else during the day. Weather changes could lead to challenging navigation.

Stage 5: Low to Medium. The initial descent to the Ameln Valley is a little steep in places but once in the Ameln Valley the consequences of getting lost are generally not serious.

Stage 6: Low to Medium. The terrain is quite well travelled and habitation is always within sight.

Stage 7: Medium. The trail goes through sparsely populated areas and some care is required with route finding.

STAGE 1

Ait Baha to Tizi N'Takoucht

Start: Hotel Aladarissa, Ait Baha

Finish: Commune Tizi N'Takoucht (236 452)

Distance: 18km

Ascent/descent: 850/275m

Average gradients: +7%/-5%

Grade: Moderate

Time: 5–6hrs

Maps: OAC Ranger Map Sheet 1 (Taskra). This replaces OAC Mini Map 1 (Taskra)

which did not cover the first 15km

Waypoints: (1) 190 598* (2) 187 536* (3) 217 500* (4) 224 477 (5) 236 463 (6) 236 452

* NB Waypoints 1,2, 3 relate to OAC Ranger Map Sheet 1 (Taskra) or OAC Tourist Explorer Map

Terrain

The first two thirds of the route is easy going on a paved then unsurfaced road. The gradient steepens as it approaches the village of Lksba (Al Oachat) with attention to navigation needed on the path between 14.5km and 16.5km (this section is on the OAC Taskra Map).

Accommodation

If available the best option is Gite Takoucht. This was taking customers until 2015 when it closed for renovation and has had an irregular opening pattern since then. The tourist information office in Ait Baha (closed on Sundays) is the best source of information about the status of this gite. If open, the gite is reached by taking the left hand bend 700m beyond the municipality buildings at Tizi N'Takoucht and just beyond the point where the route breaks off right for Stage 2. From the bend stay on the main road, walk 100m then turn left (water pipe and tap at 238 448) and down the track for 100m to the gite. If the gite is not open it is necessary to wild camp somewhere in the vicinity of Tizi N'Takoucht. An ‘emergency’ campsite is available near Agadir N'Tafoukt. The building is disused and has a roof but no door and is probably in local ownership. There is a flat threshing pad outside.

Advice

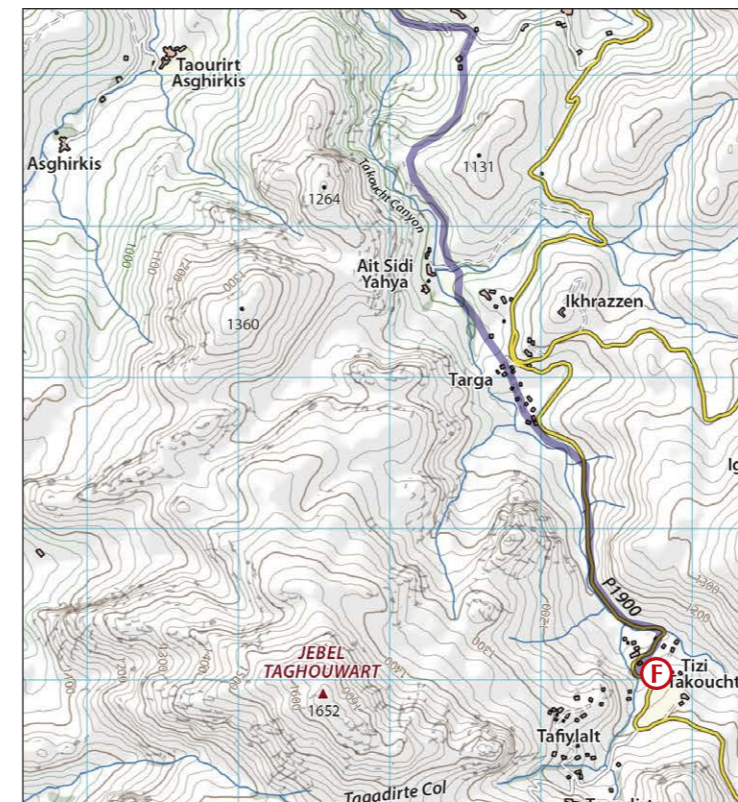
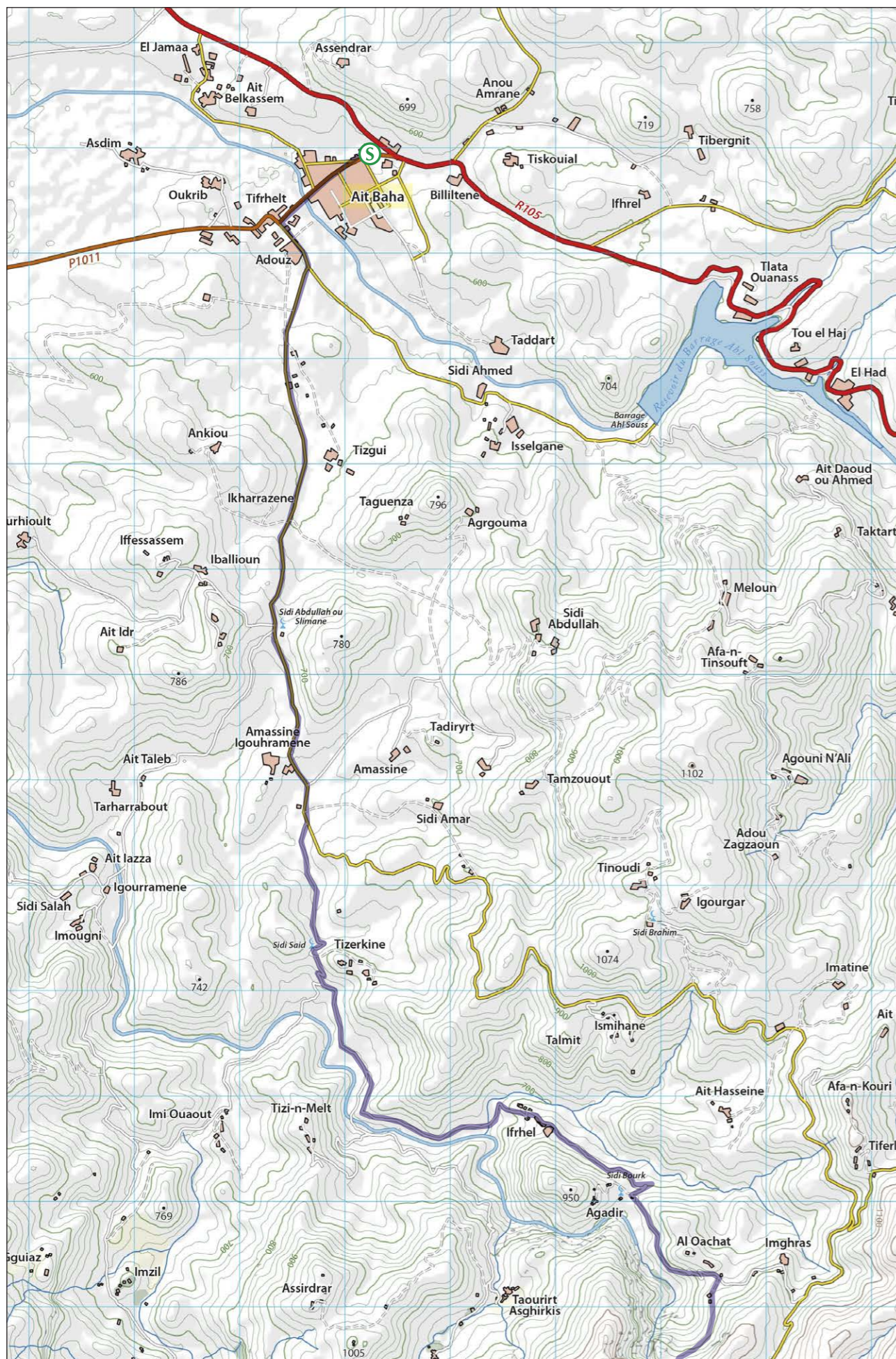
- Unless you intend to visit Tafraout (end of Stage 4) you need to stock up with provisions in town as supplies are limited to occasional kiosks in villages. You can buy almost anything you might need at the mid-week market in Ait Baha, otherwise the town otherwise the town has no tourist attractions.
- Water needs to be carried or obtained en-route in villages. If you decide to continue past the notional finish (the municipality buildings) and on to Stage 2 and need water then the tap (mentioned above) was working in 2017.
- Unless you intend to camp before Tizi N'Takoucht allow at least 90 minutes to clear the hamlet and find a campsite on the path up to Jebel Tikwyene (Stage 2). The ground can be quite vegetated in springtime and you may need to clear the site.

Overview

The route provides a gentle introduction to the foothills of the northern Anti-Atlas. It gains in interest as it climbs past villages and through gorges towards Tizi N'Takoucht where the wildflowers are delightful in springtime and the mountains present their first real challenge. The settlement of Tizi is quite small resembling no more than a collection of hamlets. This stage finishes at the municipal administration building carpark about 1km before the gite.

1 From the hotel head down the main street for 700m to cross the bridge and turn left at the T junction. After 500m turn right to follow a surfaced road for almost 5km until the road crosses a bridge (a well is on the extreme left) and drops into a dip to cross another turreted bridge.

2 At the end of this bridge, take a road (unsurfaced in April 2018) rightwards and follow this with developing interest as height is gained and the mountains shadowing **Tizi N' Takoucht** come increasingly into view. Staying left at junctions, pass to the right of **Tizerkine** and at about 10km at a prominent bend, gain height to pass through **Ifrhel** (shown as Ifghal on the 1:150,000 Tourist Explorer map). Continue now on the left side of the hill for another kilometre or so



turning right at a sharp bend. Here the village of Agadir N'Tafoukt is visible on the right. Continue for 200m to turn left at an unpainted building near an ONIP water portal.

③ Here a track leads off right to **Agadir N'Tafoukt**. There is a possible campsite in front or a rough shelter inside the building. The dirty well is not functional. It may be wise to ask in the village if you want to stay here.

Follow the track to pass a dry tap at Lksba (**Al Oachat**). Water can be obtained from houses in the village. Turn right towards a distinctive red building (dogs may bark) and onto a path left of a steep gorge. You may just see an old burial ground on the right. The path is now marked at the top of OAC Map 1 (Taskra) at 225 489. Continue pleasantly to drop onto a concrete road 20m left of the stream crossing and a village, **Ait Sidihiya** (Ait Sidi Yahya on download map).

④ Turn left and walk up the concrete road for only 8m then drop down rightwards to cross a stream again rightwards. Take the higher of two

paths and gradually gain height to pass beneath the village with a prominent red house and onwards to a large boulder. [Here it is possible to strike up leftwards to the road and obtain water from a tap next to a water tower 250m north and thereafter to follow the road to Tizi.]

From the boulder keep on the path towards an unpainted concrete building. Pass this on the left side to gain a concrete ramp which is followed to its end through the village of **Targa**. Take a dog-leg left then right to follow overhead cables past another concrete building and around terrace paths until a compound on the right is reached just short of two very large boulders and a pylon.

⑤ Although it is possible to battle onwards to the head of the valley along deteriorating paths, all but the purists (or those intending to camp here), will depart leftwards up to join the road and continue onwards to the Tizi commune buildings at 236 452.



STAGE 2

Tizi N'Takoucht to Taskra Promontory

Start: Municipality buildings of Tizi N'Takoucht (236 452)

Finish: Jebel Taskra's Southern Promontory (248 356)

Distance: 15km

Ascent/Descent: 1200m/300m

Average gradients: +9.5%/-12%

Grade: Moderate +

Time: 5-6hrs

Maps: OAC1 (Taskra) or OAC Ranger Sheet 1 (Taskra)

Waypoints: (1) 236 452 (2) 222 441 (3) 228 429 (4) 241 414 (5) 248 356

Terrain

The first section passes through vegetation which is at its best in springtime. The ascent to Jebel Tikwyene is slightly ambiguous before easy scrambling leads to the summit. After the descent onto the plateau proper (WP4) the terrain becomes more amenable. Some attention to navigation is needed where the path thins out, especially on ascending to Jebel Taskra and on leaving the summit for the southern promontory. If the day is extended and the campsite is not used, the descent from the southern promontory requires a little care.

Accommodation

Wild camping at WP5 is possible on Jebel Taskra's southern promontory with stunning views across the Tamza (Samazar) Valley. It has a flat area, a low-walled open shelter, a fireplace, and sometimes firewood. There is a collection of old disused pots and pans and it has evidently been used by shepherds or locals. There is no water. There are alternatives in the event that circumstances are not favourable (see below).

Advice

- If you were unable to stay at Gite Takoucht you may still be able to use the tap on the main road close to the approach road to the gite as described in Stage 1.
- WP4 offers an escape route to the road (see descent route for Route 33) and an opportunity for friends staying locally to join the stage or to leave a water/food drop in advance.
- If you are ahead of schedule and do not want to camp on the southern promontory, a descent can be made to seek another campsite on the opening sections of Stage 3. If the weather is against you emergency shelter could probably be sought in the mosque in the village one hour south of the promontory. Alternatively continue to where the village access road meets the main Aouguez Road where there is a collection of buildings with canopies.

Overview

Sitting just beyond the foothills of the western Anti-Atlas are the mountains which form the Tizi N'Takoucht escarpment. They are the first to be seen when travelling from Ait Baha to Tafrout.

Tizi N'Takoucht is a sparsely populated area defined mainly by the municipality buildings at the start. This could be the starting point for those wishing to omit Stage 1.

The stage is at its best in springtime when the approach has wildflowers in abundance. The grey/white towers, gullies and walls at the very start are alpine-like in appearance and contrast sharply with the colouration of the more distant Ameln Valley. After the summit of Jebel Tikwyene (aka Ardrar n'Takoucht), the plateau becomes somewhat featureless but there is a good view over the escarpment from just east of WP4.

1 From the **Tizi N'Takoucht** commune building walk up the road for 700m. Turn right and take the road towards **Tagadirte** (this road is 200m west of the gite access). Follow the road for 500m until a concrete ramp leads off leftwards around bends towards the top village. Stop at 0.7km just 100m short of the end of the road and turn right on to the lower of two terrace paths by low walls. Contour westwards around the hillside, taking the left fork just before a large boulder.

2 Pass right of a bent tree and left of a prominent rock finger to ascend **West Gully**. Aim for two square-shaped boulders on the skyline. The path is sometimes partially obscured by springtime plant growth. At the boulders trend right



Ascending West Gully from WP2



then after a few metres take the left division of the path upwards between two rocky ridges staying closer to the right as height is gained towards a col and a solitary tree.

The summit plateau and west/east ridge of the mountain lies ahead but must be gained on the left (E) side by working up a vegetated slope on sometimes cairned but indeterminate paths to a good view over the Tizi escarpment. Swing right over rocky ground taking the best of the paths then either gain the summit by grade 1/2 friction scrambling or by contouring around clockwise for easier access. From the 1918m summit of **Jebel Tikwyene** enjoy extensive views southeast to Jebel El Kest, west to the Targa Skyline (Route 34) and east across desert-like scenery.

③ Leave the summit to the east, following cairned large boulders. Avoid descending completely into the bowl on the right and instead aim towards the rocky ridge bounding the escarpment rim. Taking advantage of any available paths, contour southwards to cross two E/W ridges by a little scrambling. Avoid staying very close to the rim as the paths are poor. Instead continue towards a notch in the distinctive E–W running crags ahead. An escape route is close but not obvious. It is described in more detail in Route 33. If time is on your side a very fine view can be had over the escarpment by walking towards the edge of **Teapot Crag** and this helps break the sparse scenery of the plateau.

④ Stay with the southerly direction and gain a good path staying left at a fork. The dome of Jebel Taskra is not easily visible from a distance and is not the prominent jagged rocks to the right. Stay southerly to pass right of the 1886m summit of **Adrar Asdrum** then take a slight dip leftwards (more SE).

As the path deteriorates continue straight ahead crossing a wide gully and up a vegetated tongue to contour rightwards towards the unremarkable 1951m summit of **Jebel Taskra**. Ahead to the right and at the end of the ridge is Taskra's multiply cairned 1910m southern promontory. This is the recommended camping place and is reached by contouring the hillside towards the south rim. It offers excellent views of the Tirki and Tamza (Samazar) valleys.

⑤ The **campsite** on the southern promontory is a short distance west/southwest of the summit cairns (see photo of view in Route 33). The promontory is bounded on all but the north side by rock faces so care is needed in poor visibility. Please read carefully the description in Stage 3 which details the descent to the villages.

STAGE 3

Crossing the Tamza Valley

Start: Jebel Taskra's Southern Promontory (248 356)

Finish: Ksar Gite (288 256) or campsite near start of Stage 4 (315 265)

Distance: 16km

Ascent/descent: 700m/950m

Average gradients: +9%/-12%

Time: 5-6hrs

Grade: Moderate+/Difficult

Maps: OAC Mini Maps 1 & 2 (Taskra/Tanalt) or OAC Ranger Map Sheet 1 (Taskra)

Waypoints: (1) 248 356 (2) 244 327 (3) 255 292 (4) 255 278. (5) 285 273 (6) 294 275

Terrain

The descent from Taskra's southern promontory requires care in poor visibility. Also after leaving the main Aouguez road, the descent requires a little care for 30 minutes as the ground is rocky and uneven. Good forward visibility allows navigational markers to be identified but route finding is complex in places during the first half of the day, largely because of poorly defined paths. Other than a little attention to detail at the end, once through the Maghous Gorge and into the Tamza valley proper it is possible to relax.

Accommodation

Ksar Gite has recently opened and is popular with rock climbers who use the nearby rocks as their playground. The young, friendly owners will make you feel welcome and may be able to offer accommodation even if you do not book in advance. Identifiable by its impressive façade, it can be found at the north end of the road in Anammer-ou-Magour (288 265).

Alternatively, if you decide to camp you need to make your way to the site that is used by guided groups ascending Jebel El Kest. It is on the approach track to Ait Yftan on the right just before the bridge (315 268) and is well situated for Stage 4. It is reached by continuing straight ahead at WP6, crossing the stream (usually dry) and continuing to Tazka to pick up the main road rightwards for 1km before a left turn can be made towards Ait Yftan. The campsite is 500m on the right. It has no water or facilities.

Advice

- Think about topping up with water as you pass through the villages under Taskra. Otherwise it may be possible to source water from the stream near Maghous bridge in springtime (filter and purification needed) or in Tamza later.
- Take a little time to study the direction of travel on the descent from Taskra campsite, on the descent from the main road after WP2, and again when looking down upon and passing through WP3.
- Gaining and passing the mosque on the last section requires a little care. Note that those opting to camp instead of staying at Ksar Gite will miss out this section and continue onwards at WP6. Look for a source of water along the way.

Road access

The descent path from Taskra breaks out on to the Idaougnidif/Aouguez road at 244 327. The quickest approach for support parties by car is to leave Idaougnidif southwards on the Afantizar road turning right after the hairpins towards Aouguez. The road is windy and has a damaged section which was passable with care in 2018.

Overview

The route follows a path from Taskra's southern promontory through one of the very few crossing points of the beautiful Tamza (Samazar) Valley (see photo in Route 41). The route described saves 10km on the road journey. It can be enjoyed as a linear day walk if additional transport is available.

After making the descent through the villages on the south side of Jebel Taskra, the walk crosses some uneven ground and by way of some careful navigation passes alongside a stream through a secluded valley with abundant birdsong in springtime. On reaching the Tamza Valley it is possible to absorb the superb scenery, especially the approach to the Ksar Gite where a welcome rest awaits.

❶ The following requires care in poor visibility. The descent is by way of a wide corridor gully-cum-ramp. This finds a way between steep sections on the east side of the promontory using the summit rocks on the right as a 'handrail'.

From the large cairned boulder, walk due east past the twin cairns for 100m to turn right and southwards down goat tracks, over rocky platforms. Pass large boulders and a broken rocky tower, heading towards a plateau, using the large flat-roofed house below as a reference point. Avoid any path leading left and steeply downwards.

Where the path is vague look out for 'steps' down a rocky section which trends rightwards then weaves down to open ground in the direction of the water tank in the upper village of Agrdoulm (Aguerd Ou Lem on map). Follow the dirt road and new water pipe installations and at a bend take a path on the left under a house to emerge at the mosque. The villagers are very friendly and will provide water if asked. There is a water tank 1.3km down the road from the mosque which is probably for agricultural use. Follow the road taking shortcuts through the village of **Tidenghi**. Branch right just before the river bed and stay right of pylons and through fields to emerge near a building and just west of a school and buildings.

❷ Opposite the building and 75m to the east of the school house and buildings is a sign bearing the lettering 'Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain'. Ignore the good path that leads off southwards from this as it leads only to a rough descent. Instead, walk westwards down the road passing left of a mosque on the left hand side Sat 250m, and continue for another 300m. Here where the road descends look out for a path on the left. This runs around the hillside until it deteriorates as it drops down to a roofed stone building and possible shelter. From the building head east over vegetated terrain in the general direction of the transmitter mast to gain remnants of paths down over terraces. Treat these with care and seek out the best line to work down some 500m to boulders on the stream bed and white markers which serve only to indicate property rights. You may see some rock graffiti which unfortunately is not old.

From the stream and close to the fifth white marker which is opposite a shallow gully, work up left of the rocky outcrop. Starting from right to left, weave up paths and watercourses to emerge onto a cairned col with ruins (1hr from Aouguez road). Ahead in the middle distance is the Maghoust Gorge and before that is the concrete road which will take you there. No more than 10m left of the shelter is a path which improves as it passes a rock scar. Follow this down to cross a clear stream (water source – precautions) which is dry in autumn. Ascend then contour around a terrace path onto the concrete road. As you descend towards the Maghoust Bridge a number of distant buildings come into view above a narrow woodland and right of a bend in the road. These should not be confused with the houses up and left from the bridge. Your aim is to reach a path at the back of the rightmost light brown/beige house. This cannot be achieved without some interest and entertainment. An escape route is possible by continuing up the concrete road and passing Maghoust to break out onto the road access point (see above) at 265 295.

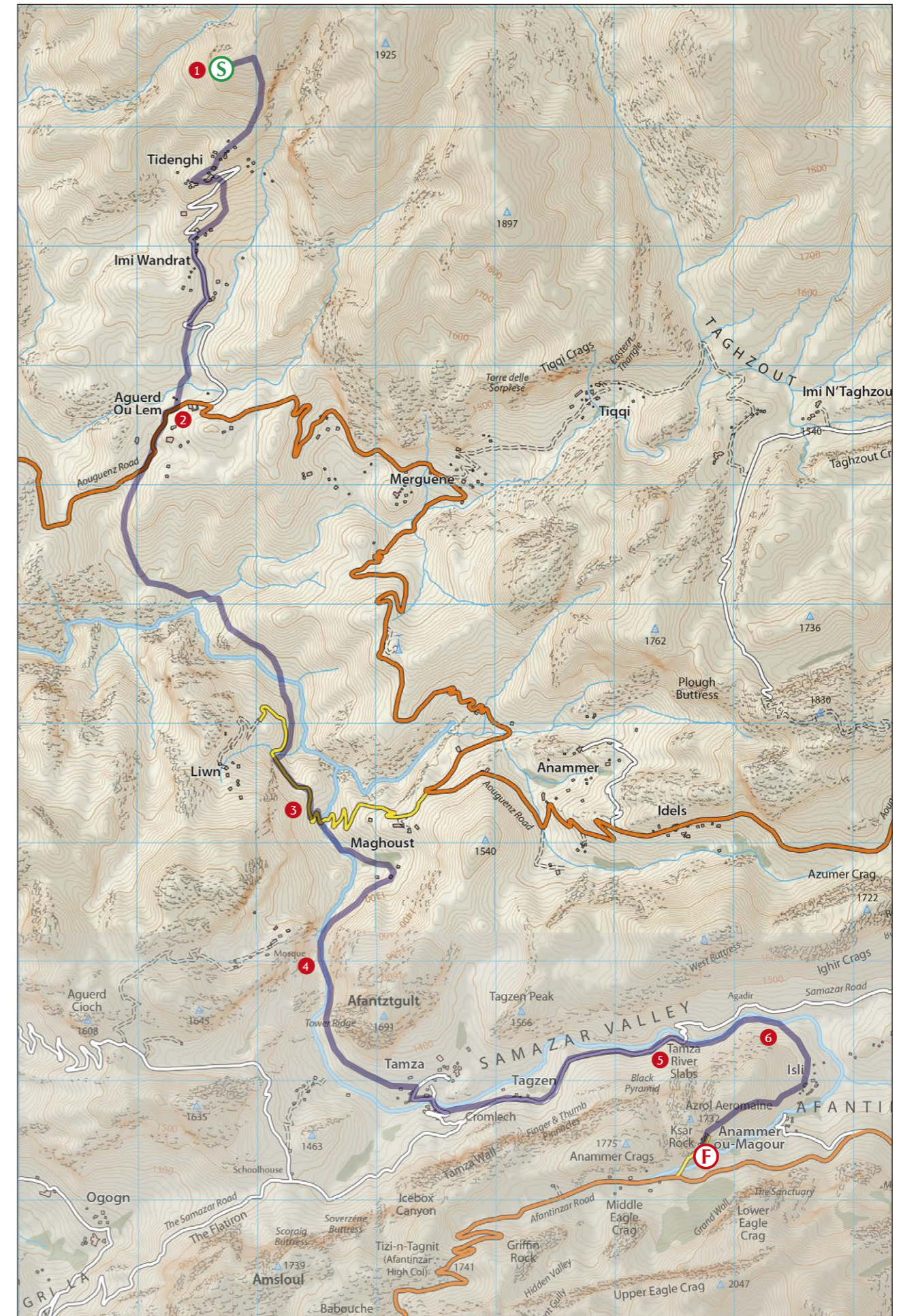
❸ The next section requires a little patience. From the bridge walk 75m on the right side of the stream to a rocky platform and descend boulders with care to cross the stream through bamboo saplings to a small ruined mill and well on the opposite bank. Normally the stream is quite low but if it you want to avoid getting your feet wet or balancing precariously on bamboo stalks the mill can be reached by crossing the bridge then seeking out a hidden, and not very obvious, slot in a rock buttress on the opposite bank.

Pass in front of the mill and wheel and bushwhack a little along a vague path through cacti, passing left of a large boulder to gain a better path. Alternatively keep next to the stream through trees for no more that 200m until a left turn under a bough gains the improving stony path. This leads across a watercourse towards the buildings. Keep left until it is possible to go around the neglected buildings. Either strike up past a white house to follow overhead cables directly to the yellow-brown house, or keep upwards passing a well (with bucket), below a house to make a right turn towards an occupied dwelling. Skirt this on the left to gain the path which crosses a watercourse to the back of the **isolated yellow-brown house**.

Follow the path, which deteriorates in places, as it contours around SW to W and descends towards the end of the gorge below. Here an opening is reached, with the steep walls of **Afantztgult's Tower Ridge** on the left and evidence of long-neglected terracing on the right. Walk along the pebbled banks, now right of the stream, passing an embedded boulder with graffiti.

❹ After a short distance the valley opens up to the left and becomes bounded on the right by steep rocks. You need to cross the stream to the left side (TRB) at a point where the rocks on the right form the gorge again to pick up the path shown on the 1:50,000 scale map. If the stream is too precarious to cross here stay right of the stream for a few metres to reach a leaning boulder with a slot. Pass through the keyhole and before further progress is blocked (less than 15m), turn left to cross the stream over rocks with a high step to gain the path shadowing the stream. This rises slightly as it crosses a boulder field, passing right of a perched boulder and through an orchard to a col.

Avoiding the seemingly obvious decent rightwards, turn sharp left between a boulder and a tree (cairn) to gain a path which passes through terraces to an unsurfaced road. Turn right then left into **Tamza** village. As you cross the



Approximate line from WP3 towards the gorge



bridge and reach the first right hand bend (150m) take a shortcut path eastwards next to a wall. Head towards a triangular-shaped rock to gain the main valley road. Follow this amidst splendid rock scenery for 1.5km until the road descends to cross a concrete bridge.

5 15m before the bridge a hidden path leads off rightwards past a large pointed rock. Follow this, parallel to the stream, until a fork is reached opposite a small hamlet.

If you do not intend to stay at the gite and wish to continue onwards to Jebel El Kest (or meet your transport), then stay on this path to the main road (304 274) where a right turn and a 1km walk will take you to the start of the JEK section.

6 If you are staying at the gite take the right fork (SE) upwards towards a fenced graveyard. Stay just right of the fence to its conclusion and ignoring the path to the right, continue straight ahead in the direction of two vibrantly coloured houses. Where the path joins the concrete ramp follow it up around the side and front of the yellow house to steps which are taken to the side of the mosque in **Isli**. Continue upwards under a cable, ignoring a path on the right to gain a stony channel which leads towards the peak of **Azal Aeromaine and Ksar Rock**. Staying left, follow this upwards as it leads into the village of **Annamer-ou-Magour**. The gite is the second house on the right with portico windows and a blue/grey front door (288 265).

STAGE 4

Ksar to Tagdicht via Jebel El Kest (2375m)

Start: Ksar Gite (288 265)

Finish: Tagdicht Gite (351 230)

Distance: 12km

Ascent/descent: 1000m/1275m

Average gradients: +18%/-18%

Time: 6-7hrs

Grade: Difficult

Maps: OAC Mini Map 3 3 or Ranger maps 1 or 2. Alternatively Sheets 2 & 4 of the revised 1:25,000 Adventure Series will cover the same ground.

Waypoints: (1) 288 265 (2) 312 268 (3) 324 263 (4) 328 248 (5) 326 248 (6) 338 239

Terrain

The terrain underfoot is not overly challenging although some sections of the path are partially formed or can be obscured by seasonal vegetation. Attention to navigation is needed when locating the gully up Amelu Wall and in descending to Tagdicht where a choice of paths needs to be made. The ascent of the North Summit can involve some scrambling with the occasional short down-climb depending on the line taken, but the summit can be avoided in favour of the higher South Summit.

Accommodation

This is available at Gite Mohammed in Tagdicht. The gite is located just behind a shuttered lock-up shop about 150m north of the mosque just up from the stream crossing. You may need to ask locals. There are actually two gites in Tagdicht and if you do not manage to book in advance ask in the village or in the vicinity of the mosque at prayer time. Basic provisions can be obtained from the gite at Ksar and then bought in Tagdicht or the Ameln Valley. Camping is optional and is best done on the south summit where there is a roofed shelter and a well 40m west of the South Summit cairn.

Overview

Jebel El Kest (Afa-n-Tmezgadiwine) will justifiably be on the list of those trekking through the Anti-Atlas and an overview of this area is provided in the guidebook. There are a number of ways to ascend the mountain from the north side. Those who are competent scramblers and wish to avail themselves of the full mountain experience could follow Route 28 which takes the West Ridge to the South Summit and is partly shown on the OAC maps. A much easier and more flexible option is to take the last section of that route in reverse, as described below, to the summit. This offers the option of ascending the North Summit on its own or omitting it completely if short on time or if the weather is unfavourable.

Advice

- Attention needs to be paid to the weather as in winter and springtime temperatures can be below freezing on the summit and suitable clothing needs to be taken. At some times of year cloud will linger on the summits until mid-morning or midday. By delaying your departure from the gite or campsite until mid-morning you may avoid this. Keep an eye on your compass if cloud reappears and be prepared to miss out the summits and descend straight to Tagdicht from the notch (WP4) if concerned.
- Pay particular attention to finding the exit gully from Amelu Wall at WP3 as it can easily be missed.
- Take some time the previous night to familiarise yourself with the guidebook and the various options for descending from the summits.

1 To reach the start of the ascent of JEK walk through the village, turning left onto the main road and following it eastwards for 3km to a track. Those camping will have passed this point the previous day.

2 From the fading 'Association LEK' sign at the road junction walk along the dirt road to the camping area. Some parties have manufactured a way up the rocky outcrop ahead to a rag clad pole and leftwards to gain the main ascent



path but this can be overgrown. It is better to continue left over the stream and up the road (or shortcut up a path rightwards) passing the pink building. Turn right after 40m to pass a large boulder and gain a terrace path. This swings southwards to cross the stream bed and heads directly up, following paths through bushes, taking the right variant towards the foot of the steep Amelu Wall. Turn left and stay next to the vertical wall leftwards for 300m until you reach a large boulder.

3 Pass the boulder then turn right to gain a weakening between the west and east wall, which allows access rightwards. Follow the path steeply upwards through olive groves to a col with multiple large cairns. Here good views of the north summit of JEK come into play. Leave SE over a fantastic, exposed narrow seam/shelf to gain a path upwards past a rock finger towards an obvious col. 100m after a path joins from the right a teardrop gash and cave on the left is reached (possible shelter) and the rocks open up to a valley on the left. Bear right and follow a mixture of paths and boar runs SE across towards a notch at the south end of **Tizgul Col**. (The photos at WP5 on Route 28 show the direction of travel in reverse).

Note: If you wish to omit the summits, from the notch it is possible to descend directly to Tagdicht by heading down E to SE to pick up the descent route proper. This is shown on the map but not in the GPX files.

Also the North Summit can be avoided by traversing clockwise around its east and south side to gain the ridge which leads to the South Summit.

4 From the notch the North Summit can be taken direct in 25 minutes by heading south up a number of paths which serve several parallel gullies. Try not to stray too far left (E) or right (W) into steep ground. Such are the choices



available that you may not take the same line twice. At worst you may find the need to make a couple of careful short Grade 1/2 scrambling descents (bad steps) to cross other gullies once the summit cairn comes into sight.

Descend towards the south summit by some loose shallow gullies. This crosses the descent route at a col (WP5) and then the **Great Ramp** exit point to gain the ridge which leads to the top (20min).

Spend some time enjoying the superb views across the western Anti-Atlas and exploring the shelters with cooking implements. If you are staying for the night or are short on water, a well with a cup can be located 40m west of the summit post.

When ready, depart northeastwards down the easy ridge towards the col which marks the entry point to the north summit.

Just before the col (WP5) you have two choices. The route shown on the map in this download and the GPX files, heads down, passing the north then east side of Tagdicht Buttress. However, if you have reasonable visibility and are confident in your navigation it may be easier to reverse Route 25 which takes the south side of **Tagdicht Buttress** and may be partly visible from the South Summit. There is little difference in terms of time but the second option offers a more pleasant way down with open views.

If you wish to take the latter option (reversing Route 25) the general direction is south, southeast, then east. The path is cairned in places but faint at times. First you need to descend the Great Ramp southwards to multiple cairns. Avoid the option rightwards to Anergui and instead contour around the slope, avoiding the ravine which is on your left. Pass right of a fractured rocky buttress then trend leftwards to pass right of a fractured rocky buttress and cross a watercourse. Pass left of jagged rocks and right of a watercourse heading more easterly to cairned paths leading through saplings and across the main stream bed to a meeting point with the direct descent option below.

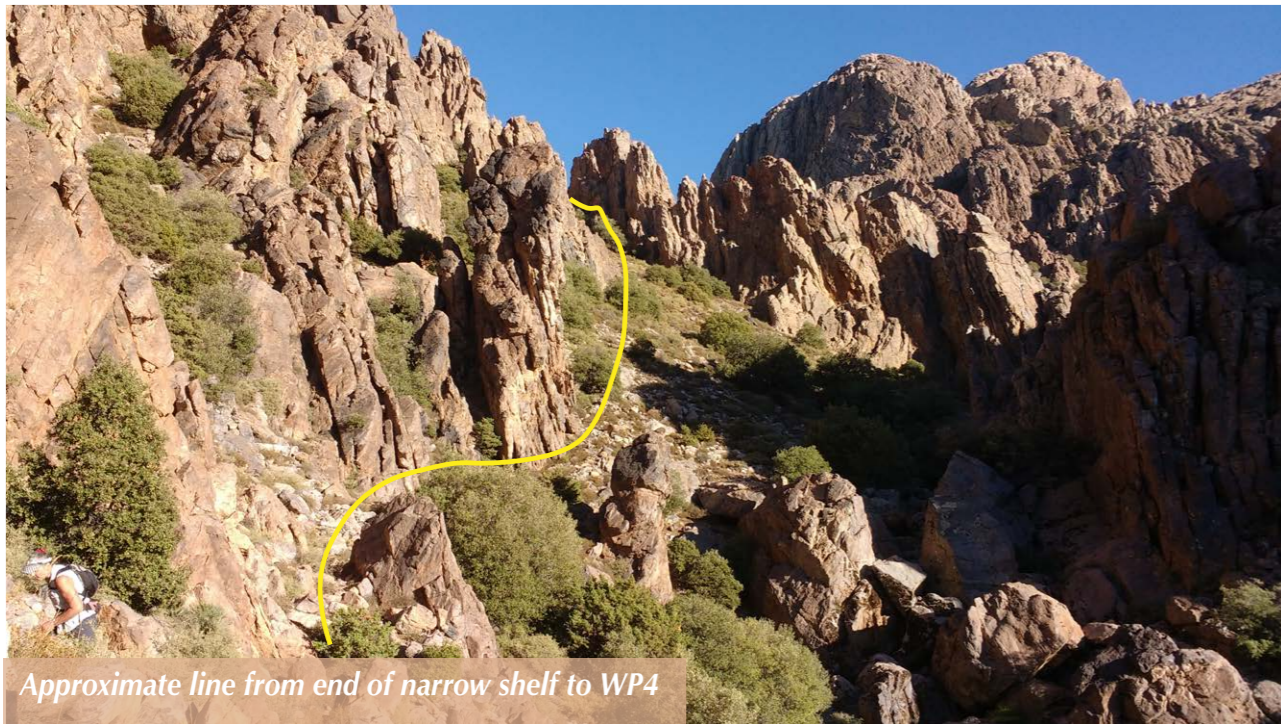
5 **Otherwise from the col** descend eastwards around the south side of the north summit to another broad col. This is between the SE face of that summit and the NW face of Tagdicht Buttress.

From this col the best line is initially down the slope NE and right of centre but do not follow any remnants of this path around the base of Tagdicht Buttress on the right. Instead continue downwards towards a rocky outcrop and east across a stream then more southeasterly around the hillside to emerge at an opening. This is marked by a N/S gully crossing the path and a large cracked boulder on the left.

Ignoring the first option of the gully on the right, cross a shallow watercourse to gain a faint rightwards-traversing path above the gully but below a rock finger, picking up some yellow painted arrows. Keep left over a rocky platform and SE towards prominent large brown glazed slabs.

6 At a shallow rocky horizontal intrusion, identifiable by a cairn and a juniper tree down and right, a decision point is reached (approx. 1800m elevation). There are two options (see photo diagrams for Route 26).

The most direct but not necessarily the quickest descent is down the steep boulder field towards a ravine and the stream bed. This can sometimes seem intimidating in fading light and when the stream is flowing. The alternative (described below and given as the main route on the map) is more ambiguous and involves crossing and partially



Approximate line from end of narrow shelf to WP4

descending the ridge which overlooks the ravine. If the main route is taken **do not** continue to the end of the promontory. If the direct variant descent is taken **do not** attempt to follow the stream bed at the bottom where it becomes enclosed on both sides by rock walls.

For the main route continue SE across the slope (cairns) just below the brown slab towards a wide ridge which is breached in the middle by a narrow boulder choke. Emerge onto a euphorbia and cactus-covered slanting ramp. This will end on a promontory overlooking the stream but **do not go this far**. Follow the ramp downwards to a vegetated channel. Cross this then turn left and regain the channel after a few metres to come to a walled watering hole which is skirted by an awkward step. Follow the remains of the path left of a low wall towards the village and through argan groves to a grassy terrace. Cairns on the rim of the terrace mark a steep drop so **do not** continue eastwards but follow these rightwards (S) in the direction of a pointed rock. Descend only slightly to gain a terrace path which passes leafy trees to turn left onto the main path which descends towards the village by way of some short switchbacks.

Pass over the bridge and follow a narrow passage between walls to a A-shaped wooden cable post. Turn left and after a few metres gain the concrete road up and round to the left. After the first building steps lead rightwards back down the road to the gite and mosque (351 230) in **Tagdicht**.

Direct descent option

Note if you are using GPX files to assist navigation you will need to activate this option at WP6.

From WP6 continue towards the next prominent tree with better 'paths' on the right. Trend left until a large boulder is reached. Pass left of this and cross the boulder field towards a ribbon-like, horizontal, flat rock intrusion. This gives access to a diagonal descent path crossing the stream rightwards to the rock walls opposite. Stay right of the stream **avoiding a waterfall** until it is possible to thread left through boulders and between a large rock and steep wall to emerge on the main path. (Alternatively, when opposite a large oblong boulder and a streaked wall head up rightwards to join the main path leftwards at the switchback, marked by a large boulder). The 'main' path is that used for the ascent of Route 25. After crossing the stream contour SE to turn a corner and then more NE to pick up the switchbacks as described above, and from there to **Tagdicht**.

STAGE 5

Tagdicht to the Ameln Valley or Taфраout

Start: Tagdicht Mosque (351 230)

Finish: Ameln Valley Oumsnat (or notionally at Auberge/Gite L'Kest 425 197)

Distance: Approx. 13km depending on accommodation

Ascent/descent: 350m/750m

Average gradients: +16%/-11%

Time: 5-6+hrs

Grade: Moderate+

Maps: OAC Mini Map 3 (Ameln) or Adventure Map 2 (JEK) 1:25,000 or OAC Ranger Map Sheet 2 (Jebel El Kest)

Waypoints: (1) 351 230 (2) 353 213 (3) 360 197 (4) 385 208 (5) 409 208

Terrain

The first section is downhill and except for a few hundred metres where the path leaves the Tagdicht road, the rest is on reasonable paths. Macro-navigation should not be a problem but the valley paths can present route-finding difficulties, hence the '+' grading.

Accommodation

This is available at one hotel and several gites/auberges in three villages (see Appendix C of guidebook). Except for the hotel, expect to pay around €20 pppn including dinner and breakfast. Note that the choice of accommodation will influence the distance travelled on the next leg of the trek.

Overview

A straightforward walk with surprising views down an equally surprising road. The descent can be varied by accessing a path to Tamaloucht, avoiding the last 2km of the road which can be dusty when windy. From the Asguin/Tagdicht junction it is possible to break the journey in Taфраout or continue through the Ameln Valley. The valley holds a degree of charm and interest as the inhabited villages sit alongside the ancient ruins of bygone times. The irrigation system is the lifeblood of the Ameln, provides the basis for small-scale agriculture and feeds the palms and tree canopies which provide welcome shade.

Advice

- If you are breaking your journey in Taфраout it is possible to follow the instructions for Route 1 in reverse.
- If you are going well and prefer to extend the day by 4km (or spend two days in the Ameln Valley) you could plan to stay at the auberge at Imi-Tizgut. This will reduce Stage 6 to 13km.
- Some small shops are open in the morning and then late afternoon. Your gite will be able to provide food. You should consider buying provisions for Stages 6 and 7 before leaving the valley. Some irrigation channels have taps and cups. The water should be clean but should be treated with purification tablets.

① From the mosque walk along the road to the arched 'gateway' south of the village. Here you get a good view of the road down and you may be passed by a local driving an old white Renault who makes the tortuous school run twice daily. Continue down the road for 2km to a left hand bend identified by a clearing on the right near pylons.

② Cut across leftwards on loose ground just below the road and towards a prominent rock. Continue down until a series of initially poor disjointed paths (shown on the Ameln Mini Map 3) can be gained which improve as a stream is crossed and the way to the village becomes more obvious. Follow a water pipe leftwards down a concrete ramp to a blue-painted seating area and a small square in **Tamaloucht**. From here the walk follows that described in Route 20. Walk down the road through **Asguin** to gain the Tagdicht road after 1km.

If you wish to break your journey in Taфраout from the above junction walk down to the main road for 700m and turn left. Cross a bridge after 800m and after a further 200m turn right at a building signposted 'Tirge'(373 189). Note that the bus stops here. Walk along the concrete road back over the stream and left at a clearing next to the cemetery at WP3 of Route 1. Turn left and find the path that leads over the col to Taфраout.

3 Gain a path opposite the road and follow this on the 910m contour line for 1km to enter the village of **Dimlalen** – a village with a popular August festival. Pass a new build then go down an alleyway under cables or the road below to an ornate mosque. Leave the village eastwards by the front the mosque and follow a concrete road to branch rightwards by the side of a cemetery. Follow the unsurfaced road east and around the left hand side of the cemetery. The faint track now weaves right and left to cross a stream bed and pass a second cemetery with salmon-coloured walls. Follow the path using the Lion’s Face as a directional indicator taking the left variant to emerge close to a bridge* which is crossed to reach the Tazult road. Turn left and walk up into the village.

* **Note:** If time permits it is well worth turning left before crossing the bridge and walking back west for 500m along the dirt road to a confluence of irrigation channels by a small reservoir (378 206). Here you can have lunch and watch the wildlife including bee-hunting birds in springtime. There is a well-irrigated smallholding hidden in the trees. Locals come here to replenish their water supplies and you may see a lady periodically adjust the flow rate in the water channels. Partially hidden underground, but just visible, are small tunnels used to service the channels.

Walk up the road and around the bend to **Tazult** upper village to pass the parking place for Route 18. A few metres ahead and hidden from view there is often a man, usually in a white tunic, who paints multi-coloured doors.

4 Just before the concrete ramp leave the road and drop down rightwards by the left of the mosque. Turn left at its corner and descend through trees alongside the water channel parallel to and beneath the upper village. Cross a small bridge and pass under a tree canopy to a blue-and-white sluicing station and stream bed.

From here it is possible to walk up the stream bed for a few metres to gain a path, initially over rocks rightwards then behind the upper village and into **Tasga Ntodm**. However, it is quicker and more direct to walk around the sluicing station to gain a faint path through trees and directly under a power cable to break out onto a piste (gravel/dirt) road.

Follow this downwards to turn left at the junction and go east, passing an active water tap on the left and then a concrete ramp. When the road ends descend into **Asgaour** through an alleyway keeping left of buildings. Keep an eye out for a plum-coloured building across the palmery as you descend to the stream crossing. Turn right and skirt the concrete holding tanks to reach the final reservoir with a propped-up tree.

Two options are available. A higher level route (shown on the map) can be taken if you are not staying in Tandelt, wish to stay high and can tolerate some ambiguity. The lower level route accesses the gites more directly.



The auberges at Oumsnat

- For the higher route head up leftwards (E) along a path/water runnel passing right of the plum-coloured house and keeping left where the path becomes deeply rutted. Avoiding a continuation rightwards, keep left and follow gently rising paths through open country to pass a depression. Emerge at a bend on a piste road. Continue on to a path passing left of a quaint farmhouse and down an alley to the highest mosque.
- ii) Alternatively, from the reservoir stay with the water leat (S) and then follow pylons to a track around an S bend, ignoring a fork left, to emerge onto a piste road after 450m. Stay with the road to where it bends right (400 205) then passes left of a building and onwards to emerge onto an access road to Tandelt and gites up and left. From the gites regain the upper path by taking the steps left of the mosque and skirting the cemetery above to the farm house and top mosque.

5 This is one of the more absorbing sections offering opportunities to pass through palmeries, by ancient ruins and across open country close to dramatic rock scenery.

From the top mosque descend steps to turn left by a disused tap. Pass over an active watercourse next to the rock face and through a canopy of date palms. Pass a house with an ornate frontage and descend through argan trees on a deteriorating path above a shallow wall and a well-preserved stone house. Contour around the hillside alongside and left of a graveyard. Follow the 1020m contour line across terraces to a mosque with multi-coloured walls and an irrigation confluence at **Old Oumsnat**. Pass between the walls of this and drop down to the stream and up by a wall passing a red-ochre water tower to emerge at a mosque, which marks the start of Palm Tree Gorge in **Oumsnat**.

Finding your auberge.

If you are staying in one of the two auberges in upper Oumsnat you can access these by heading up leftwards and around a building to drop down to a stream. Follow suspended cables through the ancient ruins and down through an archway to swing right then left to Maison D’hôte and Maison Traditionale.

Otherwise descend steps from the mosque and over fields following water pipes to cross one bridge (note alternative access to auberges leftwards) and then another bridge. Follow pipes rightwards alongside a water leat to a road with signposts again to the auberges. Continue past a mosque and just left of a cemetery to **Auberge/Gite L’Kest** (425 197) (payphone).

STAGE 6

Ameln Valley to the Plateaus

Start: Oumsnat (Auberge/Gite L'Kest area 452 194) or Imi-Tizgut
Finish: Adrar Mqorn/Ait Mansour Plateaus (492 078)
Distance: 17km (or 13km if leaving from Imi-Tizgut)
Ascent/descent: 850m/200m
Average gradients: +7%/-4%
Time: 6-7hrs
Grade: Moderate
Maps: OAC Mini Map 4 (Taфраout) or OAC Ranger Map Sheet 2&3 (Jebel El Kest and Ait Mansour).
Waypoints: (1) 425 194 (2) 458 175 (3) 480 123 (4) 492 078

Terrain

Except for the beginning and end the route follows an unsurfaced (2018) road and then a recently surfaced but quiet road, until a path leads up towards the plateaus. The navigation is generally straightforward and the walking relatively easy with a gentle gradient.

Accommodation

It will be necessary to camp in the shadow of Adrar Mqorn unless you are contemplating a very long day by amalgamating the last two stages. A possible camping area is described below.

Advice

- In order to avoid camping on the exposed plateau where it can be cold and windy, choose a place before reaching the transmitter mast. A flat area can be found close to WP4. Should this not be suitable or in the event of bad weather you would need to follow Stage 7 directions (and GPX file) as far as **Taourirt Wabanarn**.
- Provisions need to be carried as any small shops you may find along the way will have variable opening hours. Water is available at the well at Amarkhssin, or in an emergency at the mosque at Limouda.

Passing Tizgut Gorge between WP1 & WP2



- Access by road to the plateau is possible by car from the Ait Mansour Road (see Route 6) or from the top of the Tizi N'Tarakatine 'S' bends along the partially improved escarpment road.

1 200m south from the Auberge/Gite L'Kest you will find a currently unsurfaced (2018) road running left and a vented water portal on the right. From this water portal turn left onto the road and follow this until a path can be gained just above a 4WD track, faint in places and left and parallel to the river bed. Pass right of a football 'pitch' and stay with the path in the direction of Tizgut Ridge. This emerges onto the Aguchtim concrete approach road just north of the river bridge. Follow this leftwards (NE) for 180m until a track leads off rightwards. This leads across dry stony tributaries now right of a burial ground and parallel to the main road to a junction in **Imi-Aguchtim**. Stay straight ahead on the piste road following overhead cables as it climbs leftwards. At the junction bearing an ambiguous 'Tizgit' sign take the right fork across the bridge and left of a fenced ancient almond woodland to pass the Association Saideco Social Club. Continue through **Imi-Tizgut** left of the school and gite to emerge onto the main road.

2 This section initially follows an unsurfaced road which leaves the main road rightwards after 1km. It can be gained via a shortcut by walking up the road for 300m to a walled house on the left. Opposite this is a concrete well in a depression on the right. Branch off rightwards to zig zag up a watercourse leading up and right then left (S) in the general direction of the east flank of **Jebel Amagdour**.

It is possible to make use of a series of paths and seasonal watercourses which cross the main dirt track periodically saving distance and time. As these expire, stay with the main track passing an isolated homestead at 3.5km from the road. Descend with increasingly good views of Adrar Mqorn ahead, keeping right at a fork to emerge onto the recently surfaced main valley road.

STAGE 7

The Plateaus to the Gorges

Start: Adrar Mqorn/Ait Mansour Plateaus (notionally 492 078)
Finish: Ait Mansour village (497 927)
Distance: 19km (longer if the road is taken from the plateau)
Ascent/descent: 375m/700m
Average gradients: +5%/-5%
Time: 6-7+hrs
Grade: Moderate
Maps: OAC Mini Map 5 (Ait Mansour) or OAC Ranger Map Sheet 3 (Ait Mansour)
Waypoints: (1) 492 078 (2) 497 033 (3) 494 008 (4) 476 946 (5) 491 933

Terrain

The terrain is reasonable. Other than an initial short climb the route is mainly flat or downhill on surfaced or unsurfaced roads, except for the shorter (recommended) option to Ait Mansour. This follows vague paths and requires a little care with navigation.

Accommodation

There are two auberges in Ait Mansour. Details are available for only one (pre-booking recommended). There is one good gite/auberge at the end of the Teneglichte Gorge at Tiouadou.

Advice

- Provisions need to be carried as the village shops have indeterminate hours. Water is available at the well in Taghaout (500 008).
- Transport to Tafraout is available from Ait Mansour and Tiouadou by means of an early morning grand taxi.
- If you decide to stay an extra day or so in Ait Mansour, Route 13 is well worth the effort, particularly if you can get a lift to the start.



3 Follow this left and upwards to **Amarkhssin**, passing a functioning well with pulley system on the right 30m east of the mosque (484 115). Press on to **Almoddan** skirting a threshing pad on the left before turning sharp left to follow a concrete road to the bridge at **Limouda**. Cross this and after 30m look out for a water pipe and blue markers on the right. These lead along a path left of the stream and generally towards the transmitter mast. At forks stay left and then right, crossing a stony path as your trail climbs gently away from the stream (see photo on cover of Chapter 7 of the guidebook). Stay with the blue dots keeping straight ahead where the path loses definition until it trends rightwards and the mast comes into view once again before pulling out onto the **Tigmart** dirt road.

4 This marks the notional end of this stage. Although there is nothing much around here, there is a shallow depression a few metres across the road. This offers a possible camping area which is sheltered from the wind of the upper plateaus.

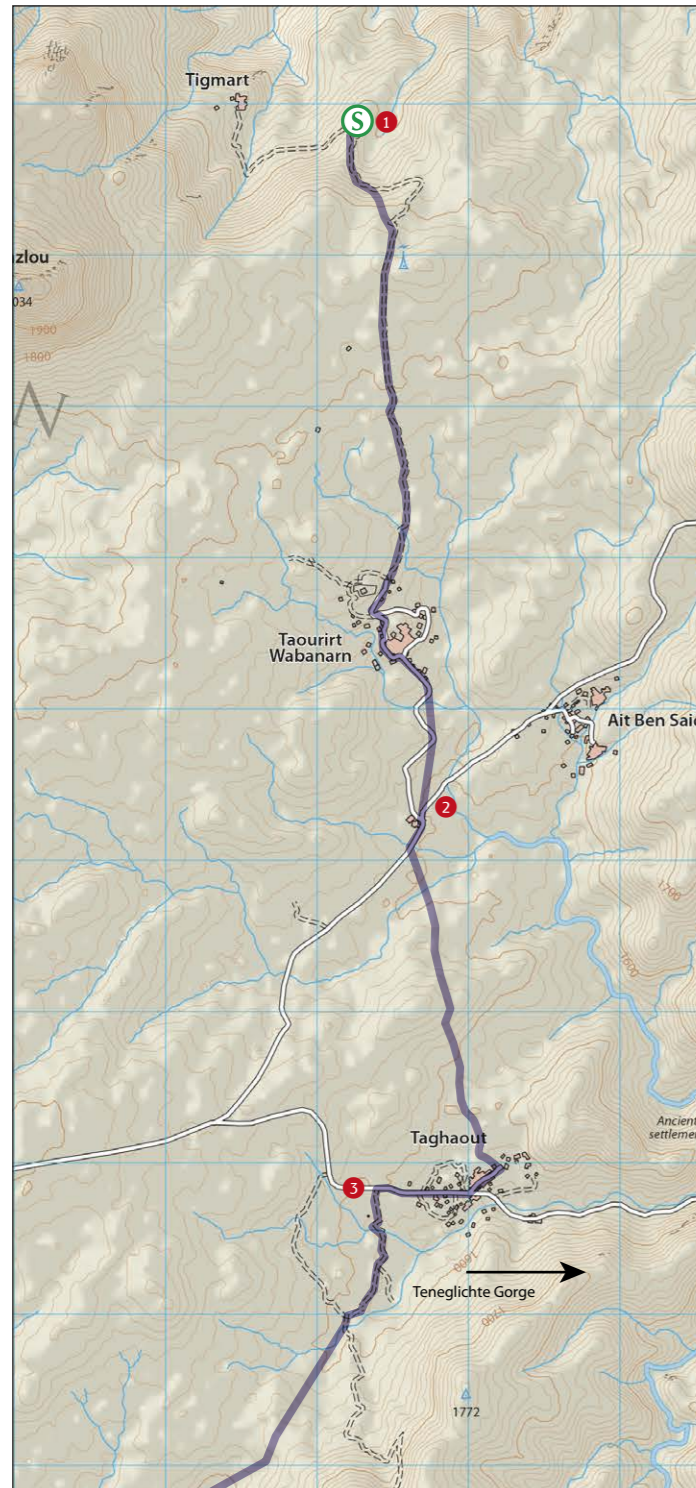
Approaching the junction having passed through Taourirt-Wabanarn (WP2)



Overview

The Taourirt Wabanarn junction marks the point at which you need to make decisions about how to end the trek. There are two main options. The Ait Mansour Gorge option is more scenic and in keeping with what has gone before. Passing through a Utah-like canyon, it offers some captivating scenery. If you are staying at the auberge in Ait Mansour Village and you want to explore the gorge properly you will need to walk on past the village for a further 3km to take in its full splendour. You may even want to spend an extra day or so – you will have earned it!

The Teneglichte Gorge alternative may appeal more to those who like their landscapes rugged and have elected to take on the much harder Ameln Summits Ridge and Tizi escarpment extension in preference to the Ameln villages. It involves a 25km descent along a seldom-used but surfaced road to reach a comfortable auberge. It can be hot and there is no readily available water except at the mid-point at Tizerkine. However, the amazing rock folding at the conclusion of the section provides some compensation for the thirst developed en-route. From the gite it is possible to follow the road around to the Ait Mansour Gorge and walk that, or take in the South Rim walk (Route 13) on the way to the auberge.



1 From the campsite area continue on the dirt road to gain a shortcut after a few hundred metres. Pass the transmitter mast and a smart ranch with ever-engaging views of Adrar Mqorn to the right. Head directly into **Taourirt Wabanarn** and pass through the village right of the mosque and down alleyways to a path which meets the main road junction at the mosque, school and football pitch.

There are two ways of reaching Ait Mansour from the junction (497 033). The longer, more straightforward route, takes the road passing occasional Bedouin encampments. It can be windy and dusty on this plateau so be prepared. To take this option follow the road south-west, bearing right at the junction (485 013) to emerge onto the main road just west of **Talouste** (452 009). A left turn leads southwards down the surfaced road into the gorge and it is possible to take shortcuts along old tracks (eg at 482 944) which adds variety. The **recommended route**, described below, runs southwest from Taghaout and is much shorter than the road route. It crosses a lunar landscape and may initially appear hostile but it proves amenable in practice.

2 From the Taourirt-Wabanarn junction walk down the road and after 100m (opposite the end of the mosque perimeter wall), take a path leftwards. Follow this over fields (S) to enter **Taghaout** near the mosque.

Turn right (W) along a piste road through the village turning right onto the main road to pass a font at 200m and a **well** on the left shortly after. Continue up the road for 400m to a road sign and after 30m turn left onto a 4WD track.

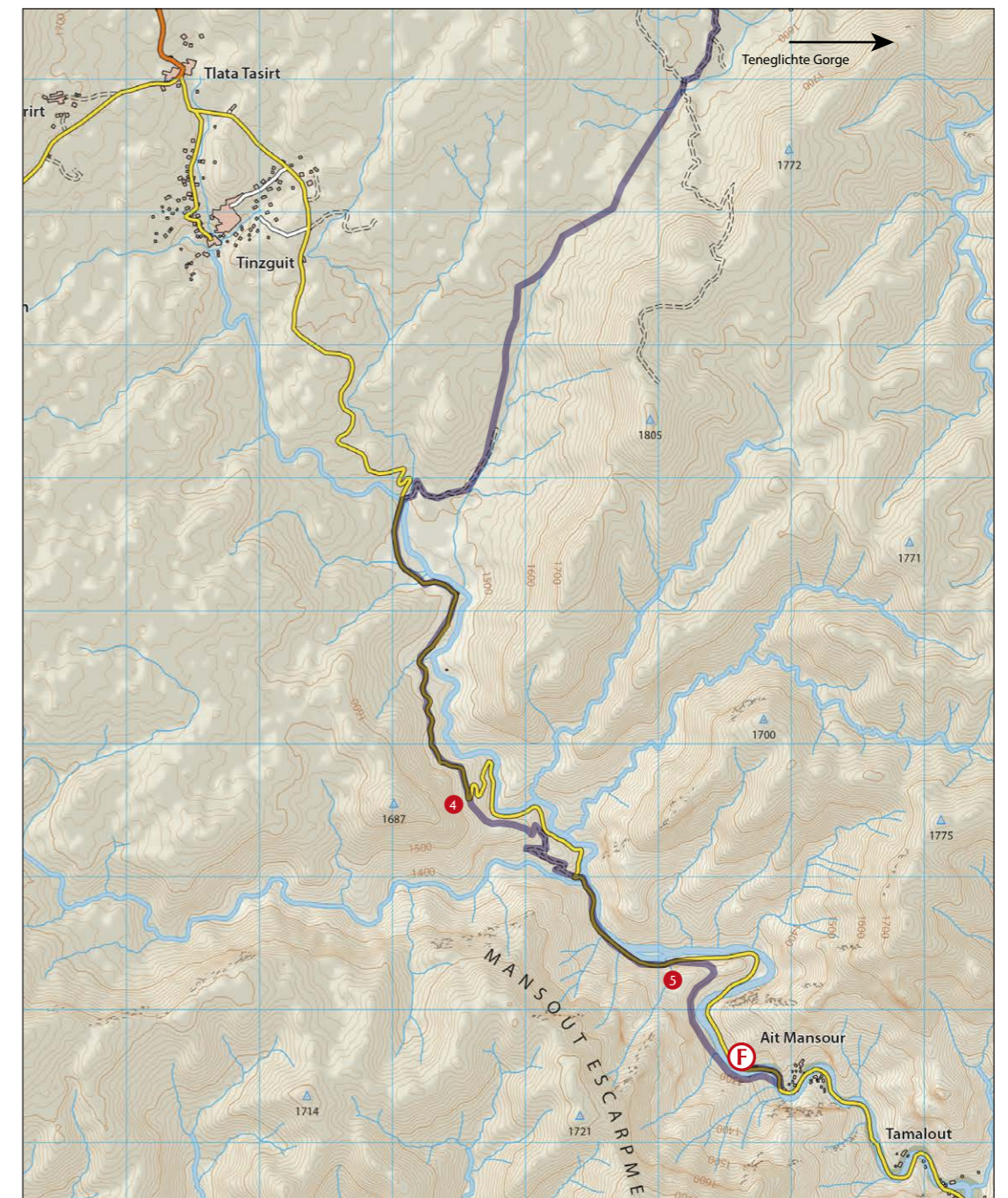
3 Follow the track staying right at a faint junction by the end of a wall and olive plantation. Continue through sparse woodland towards a seasonal watercourse in the direction of a shallow skyline col [here you may see that the rock contains Biotite rock intrusions]. Continue across the lunar landscape passing a vague rocky platform then right of a building, used by a shepherd and his wife, into a small orchard. Stay

just left of the watercourse to pass a well and cross right at a rocky intrusion heading towards two palm trees. Gain a little height to pass just right and above the gorge to pick up cairned remnants of a path which heads towards the main road. Pick up a 4WD track which weaves rightwards avoiding marked-out land (and dogs) to the road. Descend the road towards the gorge for a while until the old road is gained on the right.

4 Follow this road until it appears to end then take the continuation down, right and back left, or follow a path straight ahead down to the road with an awkward exit. Continue down the road.

5 At the point where the river bed widens and 750m before a right hand bend, a faint path strikes up from the road near a stream bed. This joins the last part of the path (Route 13) which drops onto the road just past Ait Mansour (as shown on the map and see photo of cover for Ait Mansour chapter of the guidebook). This is a more interesting finish to the trek and requires a short walk back up the road to the auberge (497 927). If you are tired or short of time just stay with the road to Ait Mansour.

Congratulate yourself!



Alternative finish via the rugged Teneglichte Gorge



Alternative finish and extension: Ait Mansour via the Teneglichte Gorge from Taourirt Wabanarn

Follow the above description as far as the mosque at **Taghaout**. If you need water take a detour to the font or well (see above). Otherwise continue down and right of the mosque and across a football pitch to meet the road near a few prominent houses on the south and east of the main village (504 007). From here the route is not shown on the download map but is shown as a road on the OAC map and is straightforward.

Head down the road, noting the ancient settlement above and left. Continue with improving views of geological folding to pass through the sizeable and seemingly wealthy community of **Tizerkine** after 15km. Follow the river, negotiating periodic road improvements and passing some amazing folding at **Timguidcht**, before arriving at the auberge at **Tiouadou** after another 10km (594 909).

The Ait Mansour Gorge can be accessed from here by continuing along on the road for 6km to turn right 1km after **Afla Ighir**. The auberge is 9km further up this road, but interest is sustained as you pass the semi-ruined village of **G'Dour** and into the gorge proper. If you can get a lift and your pack is not too heavy you could take in the Southwest Rim Summits walk (Route 13) along the way.