

## SECTION 2

INTERVIEWER A dream came true in 1995, when over 96 days of the spring and summer, and expedition of four men undertook what they believe to have been the first and only complete end-to-end crossing of Morocco's Attora mountains. I talked to Charles Owen, the leader of the expedition group, about the trip.

Charles, how much planning went on beforehand?

CHARLES Well, as you know, I run these walking trips across the mountains for tourists and over the years, I've collected maps and other data to prepare what I call a 'route book' for this trip and this book basically shows the route across the mountains that we took.

Q11

INTERVIEWER You actually broke records while you were out there, didn't you?

CHARLES Mmm. Yes, it was 900 miles in total and we managed to climb 32 peaks that were over 3000 metres high, including *Toubkal*, which is of course the highest in North Africa. We weren't actually out to make a name for ourselves--it just happened really.

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INTERVIEWER

What was the weather like?

CHARLES

It got us right from day one and we were pretty taken aback really Q14  
to find that it rained on quite a number of days, and so we were  
forced to start re-planning our route almost from the outset. One  
of the obvious problems is the heavy snow which blocks the moun-  
tain passes, so you have to make considerable detours. When we  
were on the way to Imilchil, for example, the snow forced us into  
a northern bypass which was new to us, but anyway, either way  
we would have been rewarded because we fell upon amazing, high  
meadows, huge gorges and wonderful snow-capped mountains.  
The scenery was as fine as any we saw on the trip and that was  
how it was every time—having to take another pass was never a Q15  
disappointment.

INTERVIEWER

It was in many ways a social trip, wasn't it?

CHARLES

Yes, yes... we'd arranged to meet up with friends at various points  
on the journey. I mean this was actually one of the purposes of the  
trip... and we managed to keep all these dates, which is amazing Q16  
really considering the detours we made. An old friend acted as a Q17  
sort of transport organiser for everyone and the Hotel Ali in Mar-  
rakech was a good social base—I'd really recommend it, although  
I can't remember who runs it. Anyway, groups of friends actual- Q18  
ly joined us for three-week stints and others just linked up with  
us. Some, whom we hadn't met before the trip at all, tagged on  
for short bursts—people from the area—who just came along for  
the tide. But outside the major visitor areas like Toubkal we only  
met one other group of travellers like ourselves in the whole 96  
days.

INTERVIEWER

Were there any bad moments?

CHARLES

We took two, I must say, long-suffering donkeys with us to help  
transport water and tents and things. I suppose if we were to do it  
all again we'd probably hire donkeys along the way. Taza and Q19  
Tamri, as we called them after the last places in the trip, well,  
they made quite a unique journey between them, and... but it was  
continuously demanding for them. On both the really high sum-  
mits, they took diversions that were quite out of character and I Q20  
can only assume that it must have been due to tiredness.

INTERVIEWER

Well, thank you... And Charles has put together a video about

this journey and continues to lead groups to the Attora mountains,  
so if you want further information . . .