

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

*EFA House
Number 6*

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UNIQUE LODGES
OF THE WORLD™



WE AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE!

Since we first welcomed visitors to our hilltop overlooking Imlil twenty-five years ago, Morocco and the Kasbah have dealt with some pretty difficult situations. But Moroccans are resilient people, they weathered the storms of the past and will weather the storm of coronavirus. Undoubtedly, there are difficult times ahead, made worse because we simply have no timescale to work to.

On a positive note, Imlil and the surrounding valleys have had quite a bit of rain recently, so people are partly reverting to a time before tourism, becoming more self-sufficient in produce, both for themselves and local markets, as our leading article, *Living Green* explains. The Moroccan culture is one of supporting family, friends and the wider community, and we are working with village groups to make sure older and less advantaged people are cared for as we see how the situation develops. Our staff know that, all things being equal, they will still be employed from now until the time comes for them to make the beds, lay the tables and all the one-thousand-and-one things needed to keep a hotel running, to welcome guests when this is all over.

But rest assured of one thing – Kasbah du Toubkal is not going away! We will be here to welcome you back to Morocco when this latest upheaval has passed on.

We look forward to seeing you sometime in the future.

Mike and Chris McHugo

and everyone at KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

A message from EFA staff and girls



We wanted to say hello and that we hope you are well at this time. We are all fine. Schools have closed in Morocco and we have also had to temporarily close the boarding houses. The girls have returned to their families, and their House Mothers are in touch with them to support them remotely as much as possible.

We are recommending the girls to form study circles where they can, and the older girls to use the excellent online learning resources such as Khan Academy Online (some of them have simple smart phones, and internet access is inexpensive in Morocco).

This has certainly been a time to reflect on the amazing generosity of our supporters. Thanks to you, since 2007 we have opened 6 houses for girls who would otherwise miss out on an education. Some 370 girls have had a full education and we have 250 registered with us right now. We have also seen over 150 enroll at University and two studying for their Master's degrees, so there is much to celebrate, even with the stresses and strains of this situation.

We will keep you updated. In the meantime, on page seven is an excellent short documentary about EFA called 'Changing Lives in the High Atlas' which was made last year. If you haven't seen it yet, or have been meaning to find time to watch it, this is probably a good time to do it!

We very much hope that you and your families are well and that life returns to normal for us all soon.

Stay healthy and safe.

With gratitude, from everyone at EFA.

PLAN YOUR FUTURE HOLIDAY WITH CONFIDENCE

Like many countries worldwide, Morocco is currently closed because of Covid-19, but the Kasbah du Toubkal team is keeping busy doing routine maintenance and preparing to welcome you back when Morocco opens its doors again.

Many of our guests who were travelling in March, April and May have postponed rather than cancelled their stays, and moved their dates to the autumn of this year and into 2021, making our future planner more advanced than it would normally be, as 2021 was already filling up. These postponements are not only for accommodation, but also for our Yoga and painting trips. As far as possible, we will still be running our planned programme of courses, and as all our guides, muleteers and support staff are local, they will be readily available.

In order for you to plan, and have a holiday to look forward to in these current uncertain times, people who make reservations during April and May, or until the current situation settles and Morocco opens up again, can be safe in the knowledge that they will be able to postpone their holiday at a future date if the current situation continues.

Thank you for your understanding, your words of encouragement and your good wishes. Knowing that we have the support of our guests has been a tremendous boost to our community.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Kasbah du Toubkal

'We have been working hard with the lovely people at Discover and have managed to reserve some new dates in late March 2021 to return to the Kasbah and Marrakesh. This is a good time to go when the spring weather is beautiful so we hope you will be able to join us!' Tessa Pearson, (Professional artist and teacher who runs mixed-media training at the Kasbah)

*We were so looking forward to our first visit to tackle Mount Toubkal in May, but it will still be there when this is all over!
Best, Peter Dyset and friends*

Just let us know when the doors are open again - we'll be there! Good luck to everyone and please take care. Andrew and Janet Wing

Looks like I'll have to cook a tajine from your cookbook and pretend I'm there! Angela Johnson

*Please give our best wishes to everyone. We look forward to seeing them again as soon as possible.
Judith and Richard Heyes*

FOR THE DIARY



Yoga & Mindfulness Retreat

Mia Forbes Pirie returns to Kasbah du Toubkal to present one of her exceptional retreats for seven nights in August. Described as a 'quiet storm',

Mia has been a dedicated yoga and spiritual practitioner for more than 18 years. She believes in starting where you are and moving towards your greatest potential.

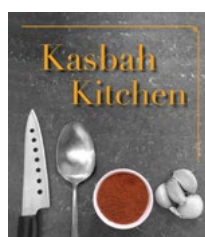
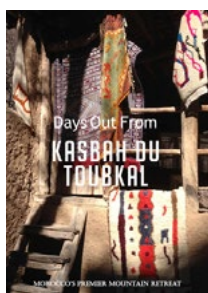
MORE INFORMATION



**BY ELECTRIC VEHICLE
THROUGH THE
HIGH ATLAS**

On 19th October, the **4th annual RIVE MAROC** leaves Tangiers, the first stage of a 3-day, 810km concourse of electric vehicles, ending in Ouarzazate. If you fancy putting your own e-vehicle – no matter how weird and wonderful – to the test through the High Atlas Mountains, RIVE MAROC PRECOP covers the last section, Marrakech to Quarzazate, with an overnight stop at Tichka. **MORE INFORMATION**

**Latest from the
KASBAH LIBRARY**
FREE DOWNLOAD



*EFA goes
International*

In association with

iConquer & Walking Connection

Education for All has launched



**Hike the High Atlas Mountains
Leave More Than Boot Prints!**

**1st Annual Mt. Toubkal
Summit &
High Atlas Mountain Trek
Sept. 23 - 27, 2021**

**Just 6 VIP Spaces Are Available.
20 Spaces Overall**

Start Your Adventure Here

Organised by **iConquer Adventures** as a fund-raiser for EFA, the first Annual Toubkal Trek will be led by **Gene Taylor**. This also celebrates the inauguration of **Education For All – North America**.

Website: kasbahdutoubkal.com
Email: kasbah@discover.ltd.uk

MEDIA MATTERS



Filmed primarily at the Education for All boarding houses in Asni, and on location in Marrakech and villages in the Atlas Mountains, **Changing Worlds in the Atlas Mountains**, is a 20-minute documentary created by Kuba Nowak and Juliet Kinsman in the spring of 2019 (*Password EFA*)



A selection from our video library that paint a picture of our Berber Hospitality Centre and the beautiful villages and mountains surrounding Kasbah du Toubkal

Click on images to view videos

Forbes
Will Travel For Zen: A Yoga
Retreat In Mystical Morocco

Condé Nast
Traveller

How travel can
change worlds for
women





Living Green

A STROLL IN THE WOODS

Walk up the rough road to the village of Aremdt, high above Kasbah du Toubkal, the one that breaks the skyline in the view up to Jbel Toubkal, and as you look downward the Kasbah seems to be surrounded by a forest of dark green, with lighter shades dotting the valley as it meanders into the distance, onward to Marrakech. From this distance, it seems a continual spread of walnut trees, and while the crop is undoubtedly a major part of agriculture in the area, there is a variety of other produce that feed the local communities and markets beyond, with the walnuts themselves acting as a bank account for the hard winters.

I take a stroll through the hills around the Kasbah with Abdeslam Maachou, a guide with an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the local flora and fauna. As we walk, he explains the six-month cycle of growth and harvest, the small idiosyncrasies that we know nothing about when we buy a kilo of cherries at a local market or crack open a walnut for the brown kernel inside.

Cherries are big business for local farmers, and the first crop in the valley, important because they provide the first income of the agricultural year.

“Before the trees start to blossom, people have to clean the terraces of dried leaves, put manure down, build fences to protect the terraces. Nothing is grown between the trees because they create a lot of shade. When the fruit begins to grow the owners spread black plastic sheets over the trees, which moves

when the wind blows and scares the birds, especially alpine chuff, because the bird is very dangerous for the cherry harvest.”

Like most of the fruit in the valley, the cherries are sold on the tree to a middleman who has his own team, boxes, and transport. The farmer has the hard work of growing the fruit, but the pickers don't always have it easy either. When the fruit is picked, it is boxed in situ, with workers carrying two heavy boxes at a time down rough tracks or dried stream beds to a truck waiting on the road, ready to transport them to the markets and wholesalers of Marrakech, from where most of the cherries are exported.

The next crop is the plum, but only a few people have plum trees, followed by peaches and pears, and finally apples, the hardest and most expensive crop to grow, but the most important value of sales, ready for harvesting at the beginning of October. Between apple trees, families grow different kinds of vegetables for their own consumption. In spring it's beans, peas and root vegetables such as onions, potatoes, turnips and carrots; during summer grow tomatoes, courgettes, aubergines and green peppers; in autumn, it's back to root vegetables, turnips, onions and potatoes.

The cheapest produce to grow is walnuts. You don't need manure or fertiliser, only to irrigate regularly through a very carefully regulated system of aquifers. Each village has an association that organises the irrigation; Every family has specific times to open the

Nature

Nature



small sluices, depending on how much land they have.

Previously, the irrigation canals were made of wood and stones, but now are mostly constructed of concrete, with small metal

sluice gates.

Despite the number of groves, the walnut isn't indigenous to Morocco but imported from Spain and Portugal, with a few of the trees in the Imlil Valley over four hundred years old. One of the main benefits is that it is easy to grow; throw it in the ground and forget about it, just so long as it has a good supply of water. It may be easy to grow but it will be a long time before the first harvest, as it takes around ten years from planting to producing fruit, as against five years for apples, but the walnut tree will keep giving an income for about thirty years.

To the uneducated eye, a walk through the walnut groves won't necessarily show who they belong to. As farms become smaller and smaller because of the property being divided between any number of beneficiaries on the death of an owner, someone might own two trees in one location surrounded by those of past inheritance, and a few trees elsewhere. The wide spread of a tree could mean that the fruit would fall onto someone else's land, at which time they become

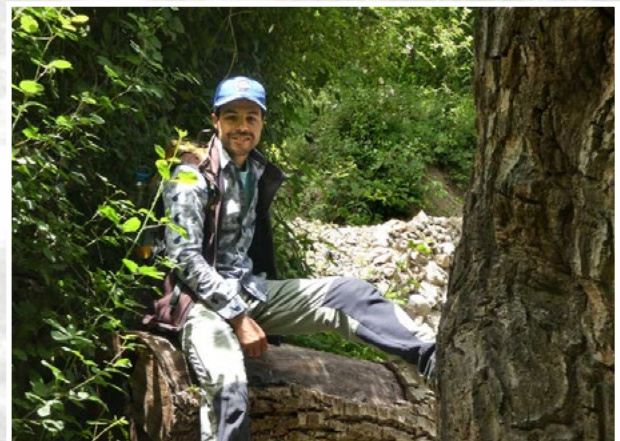
his property.

Gathering the walnut harvest is a family affair; the men climb the tree and shake it or hit the branches with sticks, while the women collect them and take them back home to dry, spread out on the flat roofs of their homes, the same approach taken to dry barley and grasses for animal fodder. While shelling the walnuts, women wear gloves, because their hands get stained purple. The stain isn't bad for skin, but the colour takes a while to fade.

To dry the nuts properly can take two weeks, but they will stay in good condition for up to eighteen months, providing a handy emergency fund. Each person sells their own nuts; when times are hard or you have an extra expense, you simply sell some walnuts.

As you walk the terraces snaking up the hillsides you see patches of beautiful blue bearded iris. As elegant as these tall-growing flowers are, the local people see no beauty in the bloom itself, they are grown for their rhizome, the bulbous root used for medicinal purposes. Like the walnut, the rhizome is dried and sold to merchants, who also buy rosehips collected from the dry mountainsides to make cough syrup and tea, and has been found to have beneficial effects for sufferers of joint pain. Sadly, local people don't know how to prepare either of these natural gifts, the benefits and profits going elsewhere.

Despite the verdant appearance of the land at the moment, that could change says, Abdeslam. "The farms are getting smaller and smaller. It's possible that by the next generation there will be no, or very little, commercial farming left in the valley."



MOROCCO *BY DESIGN*

MAX & JAN

Once described as the most exotic location a two-hour flight from London, Marrakech maintains its mystique; the rambling alleyways of the souks, the hidden corners of the Medina where you can still find dusty antiques or intricately woven rugs, the weaver's life woven into each thread. But life moves on.

"There's a good vibe going on in Morocco, it's like the Berlin of North Africa. A lot of young designers are coming over, a lot of young people who were born in Europe who come to live in Morocco now, because I think it's more inspiring, they can do whatever they want because there's still a lot of hand craft that doesn't exist anymore in Europe."

Belgian Jan Pauwels is half the name of the shop, Max and Jan, tucked into a narrow street in the Medina. With ten years of experience as a shop owner in Marrakech, he has a nose for the new and the innovative.

"There's a lot of things going on with young people from Morocco. It's more interesting for me to see what's going on in the country than people from abroad. The mix is great. The young Moroccan designers see that everything is possible."

After the heady hippy days of Mick Jagger and Yves St Laurent, during the 60's, Marrakech, despite its reputation for beautiful art and design, went into a slow decline.

"It went down because as far as design goes the man who makes a bag and takes two days over it, he can make twenty belts in the same time. It's easier money to make twenty belts than to make a difficult piece. Of course it's more expensive because it's made by hand and it takes a while to make, but you find some people who only want to work with the best hand craft. That's what is very interesting. You have places you find beautiful stuff."

Moroccan culture and style is often touted as influencing design worldwide, but for Jan Pauwels this isn't the new phenomena it's sometimes portrayed as.

"Morocco has influenced worldwide for years through people like Yves St Laurent. It's still inspiring people because they love the idea to come to Morocco. It's completely different; it's a different world."

"When people first arrive everything is beautiful, after three days you see the same stuff, the same souvenirs, but it's more interesting now. You have plenty of things to do, some beautiful museums, but you can really shop. You can find good designers, beautiful interior design."

As with the man who changes from making one beautiful bag to producing ten belts, the idea of anything 'designer' is usually associated with cost,



sometimes prohibitive if you are looking for more than simply some nice souvenirs. But the premise behind Max and Jan is that design can be good without being expensive.

"In this location, is big and I really want it not to be pretentious. A lot of people who come here who are staying at high-end hotels who just do this store. They come here and buy all the gifts for their aunt, the cleaning lady, everybody. So it's important to have little things in the store, even at low prices, because the store has hype. It's like going to Paris or London, you go to a store and buy even just a little thing, almost just to say you bought it there."

Has Marrakech peaked yet as far as design is concerned?'

"I think it will be on a high for a few years to come. I think it will become a centre of design, art - they do some very big art fairs here - everything is starting, so that will be for a few years, it won't stop. Things move on, it's inevitable, but I think it will be good for the next ten years."



MAX & JAN, Rue Amsefa, Sidi Abdelaziz,
Medina, Marrakech

Read more about Moroccan style at



Designing the Future

Just as Moroccan design is influencing the world, Moroccan designers are being influenced by the work of **Education For All**, supporting in practical ways their country's future prosperity.



Amaz are beautiful women's sneakers made by an ethical Moroccan company. Every pair sold funds a day of a girl's education in Morocco through Education For All. They come in many different colours and designs, are vegan and can be shipped all over the world.



We believe in giving back. With every purchase you make you are contributing to giving back to the Berber Tribes, with 5% of our profits donated to Education for All. As we work so closely with the Berber artisans and their families it is a pleasure to see how education of young girls has progressed and developed.

Click on the logos to visit their website.

Design

Sustainability = Common Sense

The buzzword for the last few years has been 'sustainability'. The world seems to be awash with sustainability programmes, certificates, assessments, tools to check just how far your business is up the sustainability ladder and long checklists of rules to tell you when you have got there – the list gets ever longer. Admittedly, it can be useful for the future development of tourism and travel to have businesses more informed about their effect on both their local community and that of the wider world, but when Mike and Chris McHugo decided to try and buy the ruin on the top of a hill in Imlil in 1989 that became Kasbah du Toubkal, their idea of sustainability was simple; do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

"I was surprised how we won several sustainability awards in the early days, when to me we were just doing what was pretty obvious and trying to be good neighbours," says Mike.

Being a 'good neighbour' with the local Berber community has undoubtedly been a great part of the Kasbah's success. "Before we even started, we wanted the Kasbah operation to be of benefit to the whole community – not just to people who work with us or those we buy from. We wanted our guests to be liked in the area. So we came up with the idea of a 5% levy for the village association. With the Kasbah's success, the amount collected through the levy has grown and has allowed us to fund more and more projects. When we started the 5% levy there was considerable pushback, particularly from tour operators asking us why we were doing this, but also from many individuals. Over time, with the growth of sustainable tourism and people being more environmentally and

socially aware, we have found that our guests' attitude to the 5% levy is very positive. The levy and its potential for doing good is, I believe, a good model and it ought to be copied more widely. Maybe the tourist authorities could encourage this."

And after twenty-five years as a multi-award winning hotel, have Mike's thoughts changed on sustainable development and tourism?

"Not really – I still think that sustainability is really about common sense and running the operation taking account of the local population and looking after the environment. Having said that, though, I believe that any business has to be aware of changes in approaches to sustainability, especially the tourism business because so much of travel creates a major carbon footprint, a phrase that nobody had even heard of when we built the Kasbah."

With all the talk about carbon footprint and being carbon neutral, Mike, and others involved in the Kasbah, have been trying to think of what they should be doing within their own environment that might help in some way.

"Someone came up with the idea of planting trees, so we had a meeting with people from Toubkal National Park, and they latched onto it in a way that's almost unheard of in Morocco. We've set aside a piece of land beside the Kasbah to create a nursery for juniper trees, the trees you see high up in the mountains, which are very hard to propagate, but it's a species that the Natural Park would very much like to propagate because they are indigenous to the area. We're working with Fabrice Cuzin, an ornithologist and botanist who we've been working with for many years on a project with the bearded vulture, who has ideas on how to do it."

Once the trees are at a suitable size to transplant, the National Park and Forestry organisations will plant them out. The project is well timed, because a sixty-hectare area on the way to the M'Zig Pass has been set aside for reforestation, and if the juniper project works, the trees from the Kasbah project will go a long way to assist the programme.



“That’s our major string at the moment, and we’ll know more as time passes, but we’re talking to some people about doing a study of the Kasbah and the holidays we offer. Guests doing our walking trips will probably have a very low carbon footprint, probably less than when they are staying at home, because they aren’t using transport, they are consuming local food, that sort of thing, so some of that will offset their plane travel. I think in general our carbon footprint is very low, but I’d like to know more about it to see what else we can do”



A brief explanation of carbon footprint

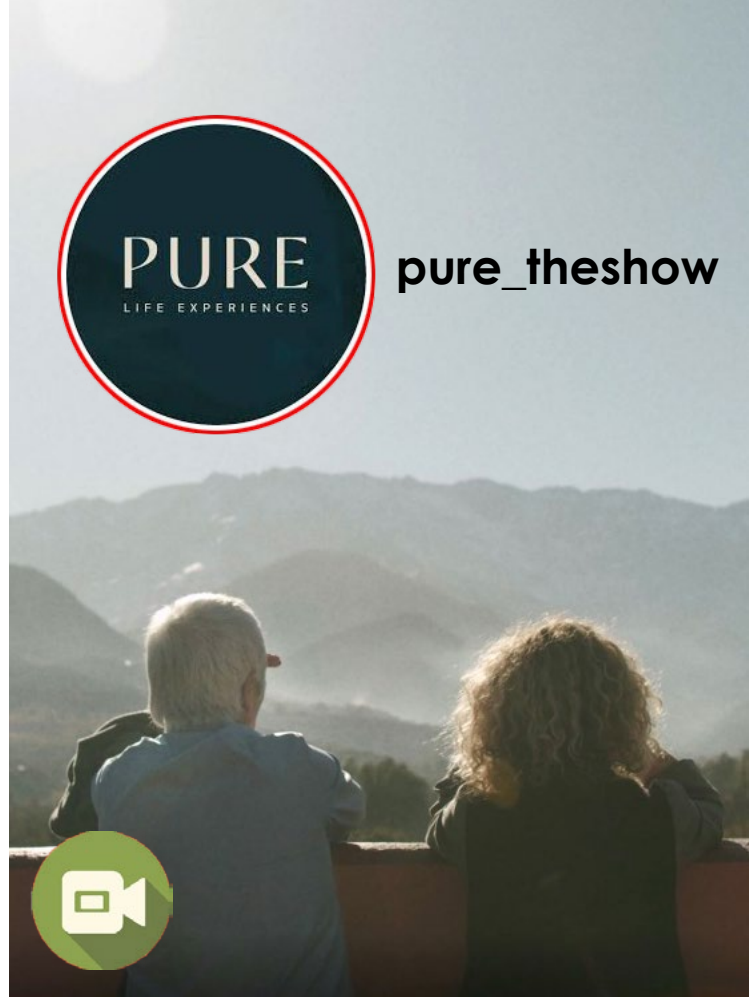


Information for this feature was taken from an article on sustainability-leaders.com

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Change Worlds | Mike McHugo

Ready to get inspired, PUREists?

The PURE community have been supporting our partner charity, @efa_morocco , for more than ten years. But who is the world-changing maverick – recently presented an MBE by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex – behind this inspiring social enterprise?

Mike McHugo has been transforming the lives of local communities in the Atlas Mountains since opening his pioneering travel enterprise, the Kasbah de Toubkal, before setting up a village association to fund essential services and launching EFA in 2007. His work shows how travel companies can go beyond business – and the power of the industry to have an impact far beyond the bottom line.

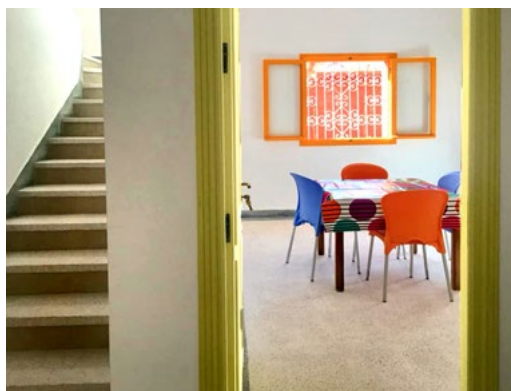
In the first episode in our new Change World video series, Mike tells his story and provides lessons our whole PURE community can learn from.

NUMBER 6!



This weekend we had the official opening of our 6th house in Talat N Yacoub. This house, with a capacity for 60 girls, is our biggest project to date. It is symbolic not only of the generosity of the family who donated it in Mark Wynn's memory, and the long hours of project management from Cees and Maryk, EFA co founders and committee members, but also of the changes of attitudes from the local community who value educating their daughters. For this amazing shift, we thank our house mothers who have worked hard to ensure the project is a success and that the girls are reaping the results and being the best they can be! We also wish to thank our Patron, Thomas Reilly the British Ambassador to Morocco for his passion and outreach, and to all of you who have believed in EFA and supported us with funds and encouragement so we can keep growing and ensure as many girls as possible can access a full education.





We had such a wonderful time learning from a professional calligrapher and artist and then seeing this beautiful art take shape on the walls of our new boarding house in Talat N Yacoub! If it wasn't for EFA we probably wouldn't know how to read or write, so this art form represents so much for us and how happy and proud we are to contribute to our society as educated women.



For information on how you can support EFA, click [HERE](#)

"Salaam" she says to me with a big smile while she gives me the typical two cheek-kisses as the Moroccan way of greeting. My straight-forward German handshake with a good old "nice to meet you" didn't survive long during my stay in Morocco. I must have greeted more than 100plus students, teachers, and staff and I have to say that I never had so many cheek-kisses in my entire life in one single day. I must have disappointed a few for accidentally not continuing the third, fourth, fifth cheek-kiss as customary in Morocco.

Throughout the day students come in and out of the boarding house where I am currently staying. It is located in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Monyati Initiatives decided to focus on a new education project here: we supported the set-up of a new boarding house for girls from 12 to 18 years. This boarding house enables girls from the rural High Atlas Mountains to attend secondary higher education. In the mountains, they do not have access to secondary schools and parents feel reluctant to send their girls away without caretakers, a safe home and sufficient funds. The nearest secondary schools are too far to travel every day from remote villages where they live. Their parents are too poor to afford lodging near to the schools and they worry about entrusting their daughters to the care of existing facilities.

Thus this boarding house was constructed to accommodate 60 girls to stay completely free of charge, and it provides them with all necessities such as school material, food, beds, toilets, showers, house-mothers etc. It was constructed and is managed by our partner organization Education For All in Morocco, a wonderful NGO that already has set up and manages five further boarding houses for girls. This latest boarding house was built in Talat n Yacoub in the Al Houz region and is located just across from the secondary school so that the girls have safe and easy access to attend their education. Once they complete their secondary education successfully, they are able to go to university as well.



For the past few weeks, I visited innovative education premises in Morocco as well as England. I have met smart, kind, humble young women. And while I listen to what they have to say about their plans and life, while they speak with confidence and ambition, I silently wonder "Have I been like this when I was their age?" It also forces me to acknowledge "I'm 38 years old. There is a new generation coming!" And while I write this to you I hear the sound of the clock on the wall. I fully notice its noise....tick ... one second has passed ... tock ... another second has passed ... tick ... tock ... tick ... tock. It irritates me. It dictates me. So I get up, take it off the wall, place it outside the room and sit down again. Ah! Silence! Now let me sit in quietness and reflect: What can I pass on to the next generation?



Text and images by Monja Wolf

monyati·initiatives

Monyati Initiatives is a non-profit social development organization that supports communities in need. Monyati is an Arabic word that can be translated into English as a wish that is close to your heart. Monyati Initiatives donated \$5,107 to purchase items needed for the set-up of the new boarding house, such as a washing machine, chairs, tables, cushions, curtains, lamps and school material. Our special gratitude to donor Ahmed.

Click on the logo to visit the site



Around Morocco with **mlwn** MOROCCO WORLD NEWS



Lavender, Snails, and Warding Off the Evil Eye in Morocco

Within some sectors of Moroccan society, herbs, enchantments, and rituals are still used as protection against the 'evil eye'. Living in the backstreets of Casablanca's Derb Sultan, Madeleine Handaji had her first foray into the world of Moroccan superstition. [READ ON](#)

Morocco's Music Advances Sustainable Development

One oasis community shows how music can support locally prioritized development. [READ ON](#)



The English Street School: A Classroom With No Roof and No Limits

Every week nearly 200 children and adults gather in a small side street in Essaouira's medina to learn to speak English. They have no chairs, no pens, and no books; the will to learn is enough. [READ ON](#)

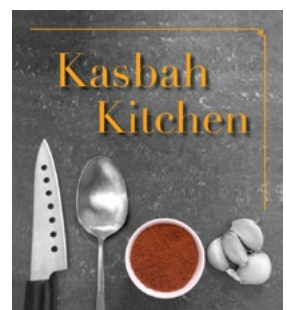
[Visit the archives for more about Essaouira](#)



Friday Morning in a Moroccan Kitchen

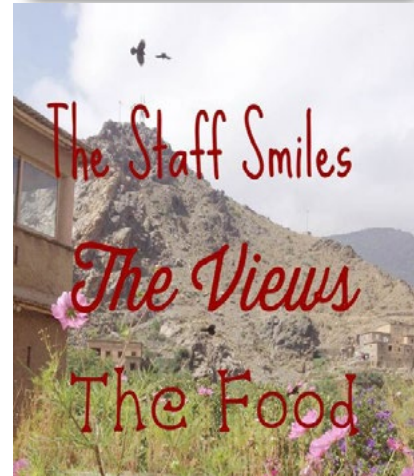
Regardless of which type of couscous being prepared for Friday's traditional meal, gathering the ingredients is a universal Moroccan experience requiring patience, bargaining skills, and a sturdy bag. [READ ON](#)

Download our **FREE** recipe book to prepare a delicious chicken couscous in your own home

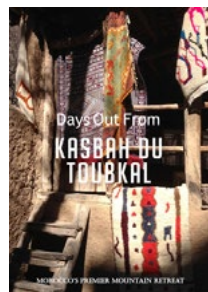


A few  and  images from followers of
Kasbah du Toubkal

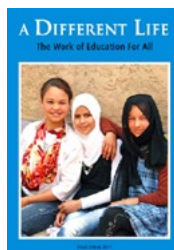
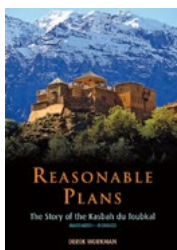
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magazine every quarter by clicking
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For back issues click on the
magazine covers

Education for all

An educated girl educates the next generation.
Help provide a college education for girls in rural Morocco



derek
WORKMAN