Alzheimer's Research UK

Make breakthroughs possible

TRIP NOTES

BELIEVE ACHIEVE INSPIRE

SAHARA DESERT TREK
MOROCCO

Sat 18 Mar - Sat 25 Mar 2023

In aid of Alzheimer's Research UK

18 Mar - 25 Mar 2023

ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH UK FOR A CURE

8 DAYS | MOROCCO | CHALLENGING

Rediscover true adventure in the awe-inspiring Sahara Desert.

This five day trek covers 100km passing through Morocco's forbidding landscape punctuated by peaks, gorges, dunes and oases. At night, sleep under Africa's star strewn skies and enjoy traditional Berber hospitality.

This challenge goes beyond the Jebel Saghro region, starting on the Maider El Kbir plateau, before ascending Jebel El Mrakib, and admiring the stunning views. Walking through palm gorges, the route joins the dry Rhris River and heads towards an oasis of tamarisk trees. The final days are spent trekking along the Tikertouachene River, before celebrating a successful end to the challenge in Ouarzazate.

This trek is challenging, unforgiving, and life-changing.

- Experience the land, the people and the wildlife of the Sahara Desert
- Cover 100km on this five-day trek
- Pass through valleys, gorges, plateaus, sand dunes and oases
- Climb Jebel Lamrakeb for incredible views of the region
- Celebrate the group's impressive achievement in Ouarzazate

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 *Sat 18 Mar*

-

International departure from London

Meet the rest of the team at the airport for the long-awaited departure to Morocco. Upon arrival, you will be met by your local Charity Challenge leader and will be transferred to a local hotel for the night.

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 2 *Sun 19 Mar*

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Ouarzazate to Mharech Dunes (approx. 6 hrs drive; then 9km/2 hrs trekking)

The day starts in a 4x4 as you head via the Tizi n'Tinifift pass to Achbarou, the 'Door of the Desert'. From here it's onwards along the Draa Valley until Tansikht. Enjoy the panoramic views of Saghro, a volcanic massif, before reaching Mecissi where you'll leave the tarmac road and venture off-road for 25km. After the bumpy journey, you'll appreciate leaving the vehicles behind and hiking into your first desert camp at Mharech. (B,L,D)

Accommodation: Camping

DAY 3 *Mon 20 Mar*

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Mharech Dunes, Rhris riverbed to Mharech Gorge (approx. 30km/7-8 hrs)

A traditional Berber breakfast will provide the much-needed fuel for the toughest day of trekking. Prepare for a true desert experience as you face four hours of undulating sand dunes before descending onto the flat dry bed of the Rhris River for lunch.
After a well-earned break from the midday sun, you follow the riverbed past nomadic communities to a camp beneath the Mharech Gorge. (B,L,D)

Accommodation: Camping

DAY 4 *Tue 21 Mar*

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Climb Jebel El Mrakib to Tafrouat camp (approx. 23km/6-7 hrs)

Be prepared for another long and challenging day. The route cuts through a dramatic gorge, into two low flat bottomed valleys.
From here it's a spectacular climb over the multi-coloured sand covered rock of Jebel El Mrakib. On a clear day, you will experience spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding plains, dunes and mountains. In the afternoon, the beautiful orange dunes are replaced by the open expanse of the plateau, leaving our overnight camp exposed to the desert winds. (B,L,D)

NB: Should you suffer from vertigo, on the ascent of Jebel El Mrakib there is some exposure to drops.

Accommodation: Camping

DAY 5 *Wed 22 Mar*

-

Tafrouat camp to Bouzaine camp (approx. 24km/6-7 hrs)

Today covers around 24km, starting from the crisp, broken mud of the dry Rhris River. It's then back onto the low dunes, tackling a variety of rocky and sandy terrain.
Tonight's camp lies at the bottom of the Bouzaine dunes, home to some of the biggest dunes in the region and perfect for a photo or two. (B,L,D)

Accommodation: Camping

DAY 6 *Thu 23 Mar*

-

Bouzaine Dunes to Announ Baadi (approx. 16km/6-7 hrs)

The final day of challenge follows the path up and over high sand dunes, passing many Acacia and Tamarisk trees along the way. Weaving around the small dunes and onto the plains, the trek aims for the palm groves of the local nomadic villages and into the final camp.
Once the finish line is crossed it's time to celebrate with the team and guides. (B,L,D)

Accommodation: Camping

DAY 7 *Fri 24 Mar*

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Return to Ouarzazate (approx. 6-7 hrs drive including stop for lunch)

Rest those weary legs on the transfer back to Ouarzazate. The vehicle passes along the Tafilalet Road via Tineghir and the Kasbah trail, for a final night in Morocco. (B,L,D)

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 8 *Sat 25 Mar*

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International departure to UK

Expect to feel elated and emotional as you head for the airport for your international flight back to London, arriving later the same day. (B)

NB

B = Breakfast; L = Lunch; D = Dinner

The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, the strength of the group, and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary; however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

This page provides you details of the costs of your challenge.
The costs below are per person.

SELF FUNDER	MINIMUM SPONSORSHIP	FLEXI
-	-	-
Pay a registration fee of £250.00 when you book *Then a balance of £1149.00* *(10 weeks before your challenge)* *Raise as much as you can for your charity.*	*Registration fee of £250.00 when you book* *Raise a minimum of £2345.00 for your charity.*	*Registration fee of £250.00 when you book* *Then £250.00 towards challenge costs* *(10 weeks before your challenge)* *Raise a minimum of £1835.00 for your charity.*

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

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- 12.5% off Cotswold Outdoor, Snow + Rock, and Runners Need
- Sponsorship forms
- Support materials (itinerary, kit list, visa information, travel tips, responsible travel policy and guidance)
- Access to your own password protected account including support materials and training schedules
- Access to training weekends (optional and at additional expense)
- Warm up exercise routines
- Risk assessment and emergency management planning
- 16 and 20 week trek/bike training schedule
- Fitness training notes
- Fundraising advice
- Public liability insurance

On your challenge

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- International flights to and from the UK (including all known UK air taxes, and fuel surcharges, at the time of costing)
- Equipment as per the challenge activity
- Drinking water on challenge days
- An English speaking first aid trained challenge leader and full local support team
- A donation to a community project in one of the countries in which we operate
- A contribution towards funding the reduction of carbon emissions through Climate Care's portfolio of award winning projects
- Internal transfers (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- UK-based 24-hour emergency support line
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)
- Three meals a day (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- Entrance fees to national parks or other places of interest visited on the itinerary
- Full back-up support including first-aid qualified staff and first-aid supplies
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Before you go

On your challenge

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- Visa (if required)
- Any covid tests required for entry to any countries or places of interest on your challenge itinerary
- Travel to and from the UK airport of departure
- Vaccinations (please check Trip Notes for requirements)

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- Tips
- Departure Tax (if applicable)

THE DETAILS

Fundraising deadlines	You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 12 weeks before departure (by 24/12/2022), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 22/04/2023). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.
Prices include all known air taxes	We include ALL known air taxes (including fuel) at the time of costing. Many companies do not include air taxes at all, and clients are therefore hit with a surcharge of three or four hundreds of pounds just before departure. Our aim is to provide you with transparent pricing and clear instructions as to what is included in our prices and if applicable what isn't.
Typical group size	The typical group size is 12 - 30 participants
Small group supplement	The costs and sponsorship levels on our website are based on a minimum of 12 participants. We can run this trip with 10-11 people, but there will be a small group supplement of £50. This is payable by your charity if you book under the Minimum Sponsorship or Flexi options, and by yourself if you choose the Self Funder option. We will notify you 12 weeks before departure if this is necessary.

Optional extras	Business class upgrades* Single room supplements* Travel insurance Extensions at end of trip* (*subject to availability)
Travel insurance	Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenge is our main concern, which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy, which covers you for the adventurous nature of your challenge, the activities you are undertaking, and the altitudes. We have chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine, who offer cover for an extensive number of adventurous activities. Cover is available directly from Campbell Irvine for most European residents and includes cover for emergency medical and repatriation and for your cancellation or curtailment of the challenge. Full details including costs may be found at http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/charitychallenge.

Level of Difficulty

The Sahara Desert Trek is graded as challenging. During your Sahara Desert Trek you will be:

- Trekking between 17-27km per day.
- Trekking a total distance of 100 kms over 5 days.
- Suffering exhausting temperatures during the day and freezing at night.
- Punishing your feet over hard, rocky terrain and hot sand.
- Camping each night with very basic facilities.

Typical day

You will be woken early each morning at approx. 6:30am, and given a basic but hearty breakfast. After breakfast you will pack up with the help of all the tour leaders and begin the first trek of the day for about 3 hours. A long and early lunch will be taken to avoid trekking during the hottest part of the day. We set off to walk again for another 3 hours (approx.) and then we establish camp late afternoon for dinner and a well-deserved rest.

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of its participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. In a nutshell, Our Challenge Safe brand formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the activity itself. Your welfare is paramount!
In terms of your Sahara Desert Challenge, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- Trekking in the heat of Morocco is a major challenge in itself so make sure you are well hydrated throughout..
- Blisters are very common during this challenge due to the heat of the terrain and the rocks underfoot. Blister plasters and zinc oxide tape are essential.
- There are a lot of flies around during the trekking days. Our local team will make sure that all the food and utensils will be covered and away from them.

Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our Responsible Tourism pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Flights

You will be flying from London to Ouarzazate via Casablanca and returning to London. The flight will take approx. 4 hrs, although you will change planes and have a few hours at Casablanca airport. Your flight tickets will be e-mailed to you before departure. Exact times will be confirmed closer to departure.
If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance).

Visa

For UK passport holders a full passport is required but no visa. You must have at least six months to run on your passport from the end of the challenge. Ensure your passport is stamped on arrival. Non UK passport holders should consult their nearest Moroccan embassy regarding visa requirements.

Insurance

Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenges is our main concern which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy that will cover you for the adventurous nature of your challenge. We have chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine, who offer cover for an extensive number of adventurous activities. Cover is available directly from Campbell Irvine for most European residents and includes cover for emergency medical and repatriation and for your cancellation or curtailment of the challenge. Full details including costs may be found by clicking here.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main FAQs page.

Vaccinations & Medicines

For up to date vaccination information please visit Travel Health Pro at:
https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/154/morocco#Vaccine_recommendations

Charity Challenge team are not medical experts and we would encourage you to visit your GP or travel nurse to discuss vaccination requirements. Your GP may ask questions about the specific locations that you are visiting, and as such it may be useful to take a copy of your itinerary with you.

Medication

- Carry medicines (including those bought over the counter) in their correctly labelled original packaging, as issued by the pharmacist. These should be carried in your hand luggage.
- Consider packing a spare supply of medication in the hold luggage in case of loss of hand luggage
- A letter from the prescriber detailing the medicines with the generic names for the medications can be helpful for border control checks, and in case medicines have to be replaced or medical help is required
- Carry a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery for controlled substances and injection medications

- Take out an appropriate level of travel health insurance including repatriation and specific cover for any pre-existing illnesses

N.B. Some medications are banned abroad so please check. You can find further information at https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/43/medicines-abroad

Climate & Terrain

Climate
After chilly nights, the early mornings will immediately warm up as soon as the sun rises and the days will be warm and hot depending on the season. As the desert temperatures are unbearably hot from June to September we do not offer trips at this time. From October to May, there can be a difference of 20°C in the desert between day and night, with highs of approximately 25-35°C and lows of 2-7°C.

Terrain
The terrain is incredibly varied, with some days being hard, rocky and flat, with others taking on rolling sand dunes, which can be very hot and very hard going.

Training

A good level of fitness is definitely required. Anyone who leads a fairly active and moderately healthy lifestyle should be able to complete the challenge, as long as they train regularly over a period of at least three months leading up to it. Don't forget that the temperature and climate will be different from the UK, and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days.

In your Charity Challenge account you will find more comprehensive Fitness Training Notes.

Challenge Training

If you would like to get a feel for our challenges ahead of your departure, why not consider booking on a 1 or 2 day UK Challenge?

We have a variety of challenges, covering all levels of difficulty, taking place in stunning National Parks across the UK that are led by highly qualified and experienced expedition and mountain leaders. These challenges will give you the perfect opportunity to monitor fitness levels, test out your kit, meet people in the great outdoors, share fundraising stories and gain valuable advice and support for the challenge ahead. We encourage participants to make use of our highly knowledgeable leaders and ask them any questions you may have about clothing and equipment, expedition health and wellbeing, trekking skills, walking techniques and teamwork!

We are offering all participants **50% off** the registration fee when you book on one of the UK challenges listed via the link below. Just use the code **TRAINING** when booking. T&C's – you must have an active booking on a challenge to avail of this offer. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Find out more here

Luggage allowance & valuables

As no formal clothes are needed whilst trekking, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details of what to pack are provided in your Kit List. Your rucksack / soft bag (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 20kgs in weight. On your outward journey, please wear your hiking boots, and carry a spare change of clothing in your hand luggage. Please ensure you take your sleeping bag and basic trekking & toiletry items on the plane as hand luggage. During the challenge, your bags will be transported by vehicle. You will not have to carry your main bags.

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times.

Leadership

There will be an English-speaking challenge leader who will be responsible for the logistics and co-ordination of your challenge. There will also be numerous local support guides and staff to assist them. The challenge leader will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and safety of the group. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change for a variety of reasons – unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group, and so on. While we will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary, we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that may occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

Group Size

The group is intended to be between 11 – 30 people because of the wilderness environment in which this expedition takes place. We will be able to run this challenge for 7 to 10 people by charging a small group supplement of £75, which will be added to your final balance invoice (self funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi).

Clothing & equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For this challenge, waterproof, well-worn in boots will be indispensable, particularly coupled with some really good quality walking socks. You don't need a clean pair every day, but enough to make sure you have dry socks each morning. The benefits of a comfortable day sack cannot be underestimated, so make sure that you train with this. Other essentials are high quality gore-tex waterproof and windproof jackets and trousers, and technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. Walking poles are also recommended, as a preventative as well as for anyone with any pre-existing leg injuries or niggles. A full kit list for this challenge can be found here and once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold Outdoor.

Accommodation & Toilets

Accommodation

You will sleep in shared Bedouin tents (with 4-6 people), which will be supplied to you. At the very beginning and the end of the trek, you will be staying in a hotel in Ouarzazate in order to relax and recover. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

Toilets
There will be a toilet tent and water supplied for washing (and possibly showering). Please keep in mind that water is life in the desert & should therefore be preserved.

Food & Drink

Each morning you will be provided with a very filling breakfast of hot sweet Moroccan coffee, hot chocolate and bread and cheeses. Lunch will be a packed lunch or buffet, while dinner will vary between Western and Moroccan fare. Food will always be ample and will provide heaps of energy.
Whilst our team in Morocco will do their best to meet any special requests, gluten free food is quite limited. We recommend you take a supply of gluten free bread, oats, and pasta that can be used for daily meals as well as gluten free snack bars during the day.
Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

Money

Currency: The national currency is the Dirham, which is divided into 100 centimes. For up to date currency exchange, go to www.xe.com.
The Dirham is officially designated as a closed currency meaning it can only be traded within Morocco; however, Dirhams are being sold and bought in travel agencies and at major airports in several countries (notably the UK).

Cash: There are ATMs available at the airport and near to the hotel in Ouarzazate. This is the best source of obtaining currency when you are in Morocco.

Credit cards: Widely accepted in the larger urban centres, although a 5% charge is often charged.

Spending money: You will not need a large amount of money during this trip, as most expenses are included. Keep in mind that, other than at the start and end of the trip, you will be trekking in the desert and away from any foreign exchanges or banks. We therefore recommend that you carry a small amount of cash in small denominations. A credit card should be carried in case of emergencies. Please note that you can only obtain Dirham's in Morocco, you must not export them after the challenge. There is an ATM about 200m from the hotel in Ouarzazate where local currency can be obtained and the guide can take you there prior to your departure for the desert.

Tips: Tipping is discretionary. However, we recommend £40 (preferably in Dirhams) per person, which should be given to the Doctor at the end of the challenge who will then divide it among all of the support team fairly. In addition. A small tip of around £8 per driver per journey (shared between passengers) is sometimes suggested by the lead guide. Please ensure you have enough cash on you before you depart the hotel as tips will be distributed on the final night of camping, prior to returning to Ouarzazate. This means there will NOT be the opportunity to get cash out for tips on returning to Ouarzazate as many of the staff will not be returning with you. If you cannot exchange currency at the airport on your arrival, there is an ATM close to the hotel which you can ask the guide to take you to prior to your departure for the desert.

Phone & WiFi

You will have a good phone and WiFi reception while at Ouarzazate. On trekking days, there will be some phone signal at some points.

Emergencies

We endeavour to provide a trained expedition medic to follow you on this trek with a full emergency medical kit if required. If you are unable to continue, you will be transferred to seek additional medical attention at a local hospital if needed. Please be understanding of the fact that facilities in this part of the world will not compare to those that you are used to at home.

Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

We do not professionally vet your medical details. Please assess for yourself whether you are fit and able to take on the challenge. Please review the detailed Trip Notes and itinerary to get a better idea of what is involved. Please speak to your doctor or specialist if you have any concerns about taking part. If you think that there are things we can do to make the challenge more accessible/comfortable for you, it is your responsibility to let us know, and we will then let you know if we can accommodate your request.

Medical Support

First Aid qualified staff will be provided with the medical details that you give on your booking form but please note that they are on the challenge to support with medical matters related to the challenge environment and terrain itself, i.e. heat/cold, high altitude and so on. They will deal with any incidents and accidents (cuts, sprains, breaks and so on). They are not intended to continue any ongoing specialist medical care that you receive in the UK for pre-exiting medical conditions, and should not be assumed to have any professional experience of your specific medical condition.

If you have any specific needs around pre-existing medical conditions, you should discuss with your family doctor or specialist in advance and can discuss any advice given by them with the challenge leader or doctor.

“

It was a phenomenal experience, something which was way out of my comfort zone but I'm so glad I took on the adventure. The team was super supportive, and made the whole challenge a lot more enjoyable.

Aatteeqa Karim

“

The unforgettable vastness of The Sahara - the vivid red sunsets that covered miles on the western horizon and not forgetting the fun we had racing down the sand dunes!

Ali Cork

“

The best part of the day was the end; the camp fire, eating under the stars with good company. As clichéd as it sounds, an experience of a lifetime!

Faisal Khan

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Any more questions?

Contact us:

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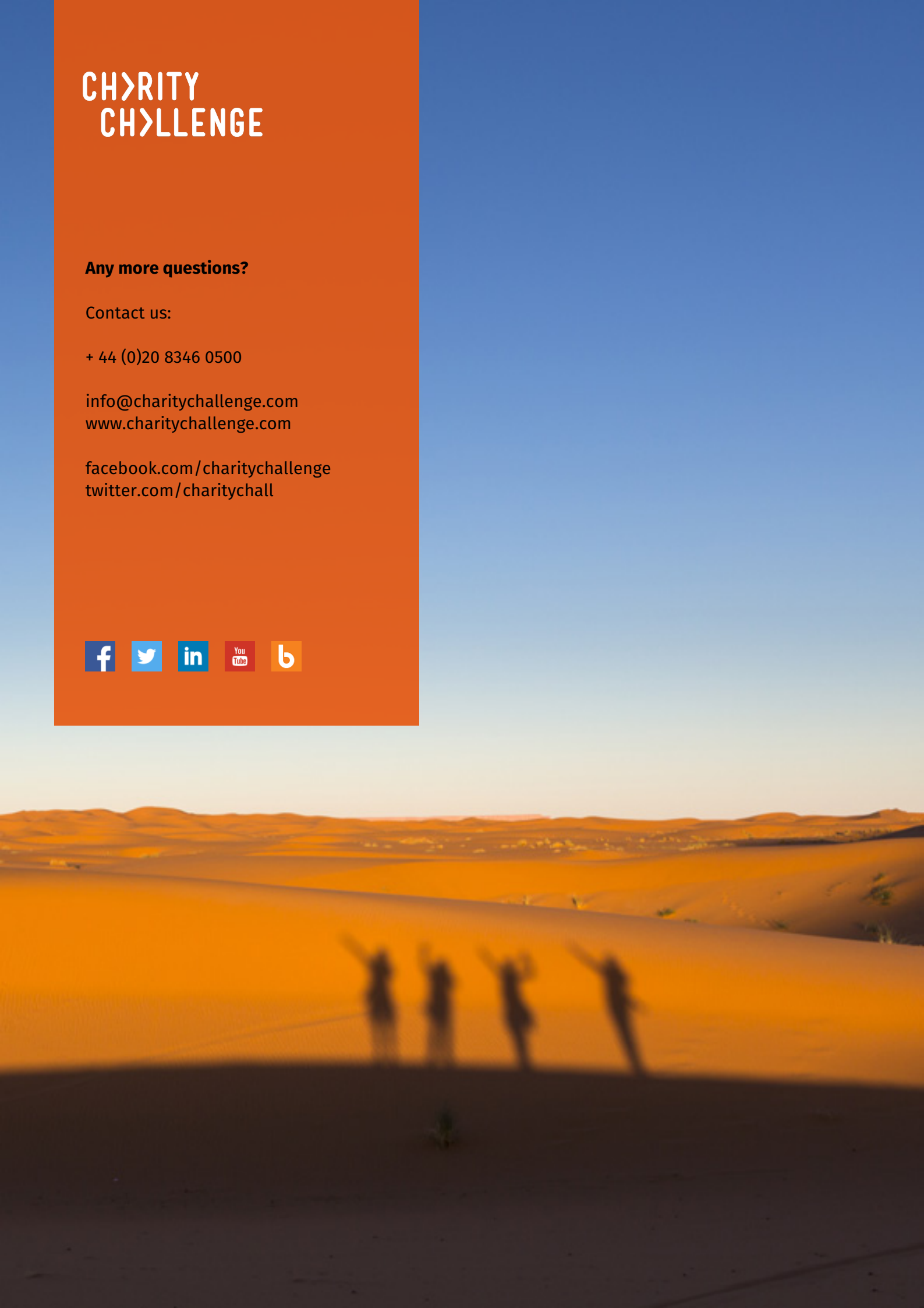
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