

Touristic guide

AIT BOUGUEMEZ

THE HAPPY MOROCCAN VALLEY

Wildly charming mountains, perched
villages, oases of greenery

EDITION 2023





The Valley of Ait Bouguemez

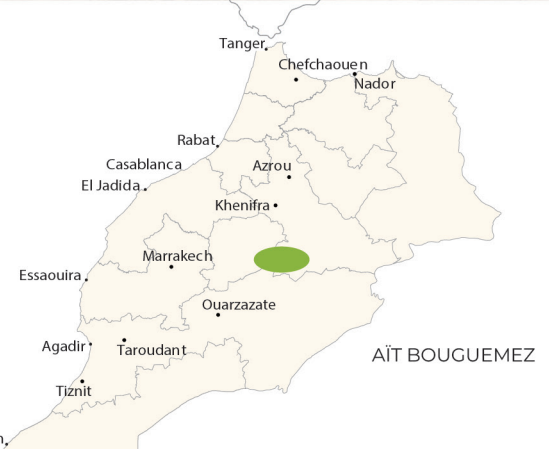
In the heart of the M'Goun Geopark and at the foot of the Central High Atlas, the "Happy Valley" stretches about thirty kilometers long and one kilometer wide. It is abundant with orchards and gardens filled with apple and walnut trees, which contrast with the austerity of the surrounding steep slopes. Comprised of multiple pisé villages clinging to the mountainside and remarkable fortress-like granaries,

Ait Bouguemez Valley is a paradise for mountain tourism. You will encounter hospitable and helpful locals while accredited tourist guides and sports instructors will accompany you on your hikes and other sports or cultural activities. As for traditions, the valley is known for its unique customs, especially in terms of clothing, woolen carpets, and wedding celebrations.

Situation



180 km from Marrakech via Demnate and the natural bridge of Imi n'Ifri. 378 km from Casablanca. 160 km from Beni Mellal via Lake Bin El Ouidane. 100 km from Ouzoud waterfalls. 80 km from Azilal and the M'Goun Geopark Museum. 120 km from Kellaat M'Gouna.



- Population : 15000 inhabitants
- Altitude : 1800 – 2100 m
- Municipality : Tabant

The Ait Bouguemez valley has several villages to discover and explore during your visits.



Attractions



SELECTION OF ATTRACTIONS

- The villages of the valley with their earthen architecture
- M'Goun, the third highest peak in Morocco
- The peaks that surround the valley: Jbel Tizal, Igoudamen, Ouaougoulzat and Azourki
- Lake Izourar
- The gorges of Jrou and Aarouss
- The collective granary of Sidi Moussa
- The dinosaur footprints of Ibakalliwn
- SBEI and Oued Lakhdar Ramsar site.

CLOSE TO THE VALLEY

- Zawiat Ahançal
- Ait Bou Oulli
- The M'Goun Geopark Museum in Azilal

A guide specifically dedicated to the sites of Zawiat Ahançal and Ait Bou Oulli is available.

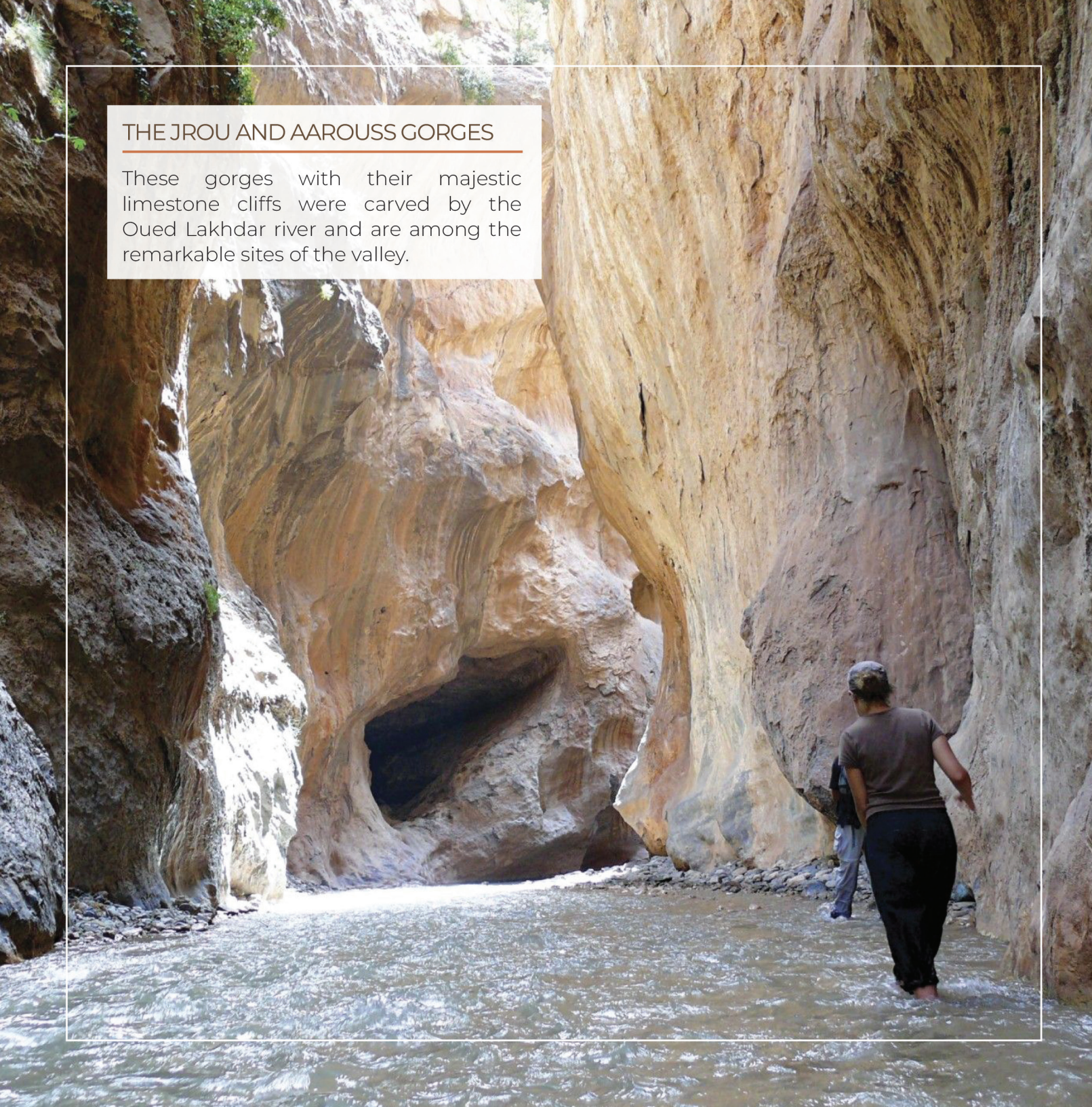
See and discover



These lists are not exhaustive. A multitude of sites, landscapes, traditions and curiosities remain to be discovered depending on your points of interests and desires.

THE JROU AND AAROOUSS GORGES

These gorges with their majestic limestone cliffs were carved by the Oued Lakhdar river and are among the remarkable sites of the valley.



IZOURAR LAKE

Perched at about 2600 meters above sea level, the magnificent temporary lake of Izourar, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, covers nearly 5 km². It is teeming with endemic species adapted to its dry high altitude environment. In winter it is covered with snow, in summer the infiltration of water and the strong evaporation dries it out. From April to August the nomadic camps occupy the edges of the lake.





Nature Activities or sports

- Hiking
- Hikes on the back of mules
- Trekking (hiking with ascent of a peak)
- Horseback riding
- Nordic skiing
- Snowshoe hikes
- Mountain biking (MTB)
- Canyoning
- Climbing
- Paragliding
- Marathon

*For sports enthusiasts
of all levels*

HIKING

Several walking and mule circuits are offered with different durations, levels of difficulty and distances. Examples of circuits : hikes to the Gorges d'Aarouss; Jrou and Lake Izourar; hikes on transhumance trails to join the nomads; hikes for ecotourism enthusiasts in areas of high biodiversity (see section on biodiversity).



Use certified guides to accompany you and inform you about the existing hiking possibilities.

TREKKING

The ascent of the summit of M'Goun, the third highest peak in Morocco at 4071 meters, is highly popular among both national and international hikers. Target audience : Sport enthusiasts. The most common itinerary is the Ait Bouguemez - Tarkeddit - Ighil M'Goun - Oulilmt - Ait Bouguemez loop. Guide: it is necessary to be accompanied by approved guides. Duration : At least 4 days of trekking. Other possibilities for ascending less elevated peaks include the Igoudamen summit (3500 meters), Jbel Azourki (3670 meters), and various other smaller peaks with lower gradients suitable for beginners.





A person in silhouette stands on a dark rock, holding a blue mountain bike. The background shows a serene landscape with a lake and mountains under a warm, golden sunset sky. The person is wearing dark clothing and colorful cycling shoes. The bike has a water bottle mounted on the frame.

MOUNTAIN BIKING (MTB)

Discover the history, culture and landscape of the Happy Valley by mountain bike! Several circuits of half a day, a day or several days, are proposed to you. Difficulty : Easy to difficult. Professional guides are available to accompany you. Rent your mountain bike from the Living Cooperative for Sustainable Tourism. Contact +212661218150.

If you come with your family, several activities can be enjoyed by the children. All activities can be adapted to your needs and the duration of your stay.



Workshops And various activities

*Spend enjoyable
moments and learn
about local know-how*

COOKING WORKSHOP

Discover local cuisine in a lodge, in or with a Berber/Amazigh family. Activity for adults and young children.



SHEPHERD'S HOUSE WORKSHOP

Discover the local Tiraline sheep breed that needs to be preserved! Workshop themes include participating in sheep shearing and care rituals in the sheepfolds, accompanying shepherds and flocks, learning the process of wool transformation, getting an introduction to natural dyeing techniques, and weaving. Contact : The House of the Shepherd. Contact : +212618322429. Mail : allianceberbere@gmail.com.



WEAVING WORKSHOP

Discover weaving at a women's cooperative and weave your own rug while enjoying a pleasant moment of exchange and sharing with local women. Activity for adults and children.



AMAZIGH WORKSHOP

Spend a day with an Amazigh family to live their daily life. Depending on the season, you can harvest grass, plow a field, collect wood in the mountains...



For more information on these activities contact a guide or one of the tourist accommodations in the valley.

Solidarity Activities



ALIVE CAMPUS

This educational and cultural center is a place of sustainable development and innovation. It supports the development of the talents of young people in the region, in particular through training. Location : Ichougane at the foot of the attic Sidi-Moussa. Contact: +212616722274.

*For supporters of solidarity
and sustainable development*

CELEBRATION OF THE EARTH DAY

Several tree planting activities and raising awareness of waste collection, are organized each year to celebrate Earth Day in collaboration with local schools and associations. Contact : The associative network of lovers of the Ait Bouguemez valley.



Participate in the tradition of Amazigh solidarity "Tiwizi"! If you are an amateur, do not hesitate to contact local associations, schools and cooperatives; to inform you about the solidarity projects planned. Solidarity stays can also be organized on request.

Historical Sites



Dive into the history of Berber tribes

SIDI MOUSSA GRANARY



Location: Village of Timit

SIDI CHITA GRANARY



Location: Idoukalen Village

The collective granary of Sidi Moussa, a UNESCO heritage site, and the granary of Sidi Chita offer a breathtaking view of the mountains and the valley! These circular constructions, more than 300 years old, were fortresses used to store crops and valuable goods, as well as shelters to defend against invasion from enemy tribes. A comfortable trail will lead you from the villages of Timit or Ichougane to the Sidi Moussa granary. You can visit the granary and its small museum, enjoy a cup of tea prepared by the caretaker, or have a picnic on-site.

Geosites



*For the curious and
enthusiasts of dinosaurs
and geology.*



TRACES OF DINOSAURS D'IBAQUALLIWN

Visit some of the oldest known dinosaur footprints in the world! They were imprinted on limestone slabs during the passage of: Herbivorous quadruped sauropods, large massive oval traces. Bipedal carnivorous theropods : traces of paws with 3 fingers. These footprints were dug at the end of the secondary era. Location : Village Ibaqualliwn about 2 km from the village of Tabant.



PALEO-DAM OF TIZI N-TIGHZA

Approximately 1.5 million years ago, at the beginning of the Quaternary, the entire Ait Bouguemez valley was a large lake because the western end of the valley (approximately near Agouti) was obstructed by a huge landslide which constituted a natural water retention dam. For millennia, the Oued Ait Bouguemez has gradually perforated this paleodam and emptied the lake, thus creating the new valley of Ait Bouguemez.

Biological and Ecological Riches



SBEI OUED LAKHDAR AND HIGH OUED LAKHDAR RAMSAR SITE

This site is one of the few permanent mountain river ecosystems in North Africa still in a natural or semi-natural state. The sustained water flow in summer makes it a remarkable site for biodiversity. Berber communities participate in the conservation of this environment through their traditional knowledge. Oued Lakhdar extends from the valley of Ait Bouguemez to the valley of Ait Boulli, including the main course of the wadis, their sources and the steep valleys.

*For nature lovers and
ecotourism enthusiasts*



A Site of Biological and Ecological Interest is the term used for protected areas in Morocco. A SBEI is a remarkable ecosystem, with a high concentration of rare or threatened endemic plant and/or animal species, or with a high biodiversity index.

A Ramsar Site is an internationally important wetland that meets a set of criteria, such as the presence of vulnerable species of fish and waterbirds. In Morocco there are 38 Ramsar Sites.

ICCA AIT BOUGUEMEZ

The social community organization of Ait Bouguemez is in the process of registering to obtain the status of ICCA* with the IUCN* and become part of the world database on Protected Areas. It is supported in this process by MBLA*. The richness of the biodiversity of Oued Lakhdar combined with the existence of social and cultural practices of conservation, in several interdependent domains (agriculture, pastoralism, cooperation, ceremonies...); make it eligible for this status. To find out more, ask your guides.

List of ICCAs in the province of Azilal

- ICCA Tilouguite
- ICCA Zawiat Ahançal
- ICCA Ait Bouguemez
- ICCA Ait Bou Oulli
- ICCA Ait Abbas
- ICCA Ait Blal
- ICCA Ait Mhamed



According to the IUCN, ICCAs are natural and/or modified ecosystems, bearing significant biodiversity values, ecological benefits and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities, through customary law or any other effective means.

*ICCA : Indigenous and Community Conserved Area

*IUCN : International Union for Conservation of Nature

*MBLA: Moroccan Biodiversity & Livelihoods Association



Cooperatives

*Discover local products
and crafts*

Take advantage of your stay to visit the cooperatives of the valley. You can buy dried fruits, saffron, jams, honey, soap, aromatic and medicinal plants... and local craft products.



Museum



AIT BOUGUEMEZ ECO-MUSEUM

Located in an old peasant house over 200 years old, the Ait Bouguemez Ecomuseum plunges you into the world of Berber families. The collection of the Ecomuseum is distinguished by the richness and variety of the themes presented : war, weaving, nomadic life, festivals, music, dance, architecture, trade... The Ecomuseum also broadcasts old and color documentaries on the life of the Berbers of the High Atlas. Location : Zawayat Oulmzi. Contact : +212662144285. +212661757466. Email : www.cultureberbere.fr

*To go further in
understanding the valley*

SIDI MOUSSA MUSEUM

Located in the granary of Sidi-Moussa, this small museum introduces you to the traditional way of life in the valley : weaving, farming, kitchen equipment, and more. Location : Near the village of Ichougane.





Events

Do not miss

ATLAS MARATHON



A 4 day sports and cultural event offering 6 courses with varying distances and levels of difficulty. Public : Family, amateurs and experts
Location : Ait Bouguemez. Date : End of September, beginning of October.
Organizer : Ait Bouguemez ATLAS MARATHON. www.atlas-marathon.com.



To promote the Central High Atlas through sport and convey simple and universal values: conviviality, respect for sport and nature.

THE DAYS OF THE SHEPHERD

Experience an immersion in the world of shepherds! Program: site visits, meetings and workshops with shepherds and craftsmen, academic presentations, storytelling... Friendly atmosphere: meals under Berber tents, musical evenings with local artists and dancers... Location : Ait Bouguemez. Date: Spring. Organizer : The House of the Shepherd. Contact : +212618322429
Email: allianceberbere@gmail.com



ACCOMMODATIONS

Guest houses

Gites

Bivouac

Camping

Information about hosting is available on the CRT : www.visitbenimellal.com and the Vaolo platform: www.vaolo.com



RESTAURANTS

Es-Salaam restaurant in Tabant. In all gites and hostels (warn a little in advance). Campus Vivant'e, at the foot of the attic of Sidi-Moussa, offers a catering service provided by young people in training. The menus are prepared with local organic products.



DRINK COFFEE OR TEA

Several cafes in Tabant, Agouti.
Cafes in tourist accommodation.



SOUK

Location: Tabant

Day: Sunday

Schedule: 08:00 to 15:00



GROCERY

Fruit and vegetable merchants, grocery stores, butchers, bakery, in the center of the village of Tabant.



CLIMATE



Maximum temperature 30° (July-August), minimum -4 (December-February).

ROADS



The majority of the main roads are paved.

FUEL



Gas stations in Azilal and Demnate.
Possibility to buy fuel in cans in Tabant.

TRANSPORTATION



Large taxi between Azilal and Tabant. 2 hours drive for about 40 Dhs.

DANGERS AND INCONVENIENCE



Very safe rural communities. In case of heavy rains in the mountains, some small risk of flooding. In winter the road can be cut off by snow for a few hours. Do not go into the mountains without a licensed guide who knows the area.

PHARMACY AND EMERGENCIES



Pharmacy at the entrance to the village of Tabant. Public infirmary in Tabant.
Nearby hospitals in Azilal and Demnate.

MONEY



Bank counters in Azilal or Demnate. Most accommodations only accept cash. Possibility to pay in Euros in some accommodations. E-payment solutions are being implemented.

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET



All telephone operators have a network operating in the valley

GUIDES TOURISTIQUES



List of approved guides on the CRT www.visitbenimellal.com. Accommodations can put you in touch with licensed guides.

LANGUAGES



The predominant language in the region is Tamazight followed by dialectal Arabic. Most accommodation owners and all guides are fluent in at least French and English.

Here are some words in Tamazight to make your stay more pleasant:

Hello

Thanks

Please

Good night

Good morning

Salam

Tanmert

Irbi

Timnsiouin

Sbahlkhir



Help us save the M'Goun Geopark

Let's preserve cultural heritage by supporting authentic experiences.

Let's respect the local culture and support communities by purchasing local products and by participating in solidarity activities.

Let's preserve our biological and ecological heritage.

Water is a limited resource. Let's reduce its consumption by using tap water and shower water wisely and reusing towels in our accommodation facilities.

Let's reduce our energy consumption in terms of air conditioning and electricity in the accommodation facilities.

Let's dispose of our waste in appropriate places to preserve the environment and the beauty of the valley.

THANK YOU FOR CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT OF OUR M'GOUN GEOPARK!



M'GOUN UNESCO GEOPARK

The M'Goun UNESCO Geopark is the first Geopark in Morocco, Africa and the Arab world. This protected territory includes a large number of geosites of exceptional interest and many places of high ecological, archaeological, historical and cultural value. There are notably remarkable footprints of sauropod and theropod dinosaurs as well as numerous deposits of dinosaur bones.

Located in the Central High Atlas between Beni Mellal in the north and the crest line of Ighil M'Goun in the south, the M'Goun Geopark covers an area of approximately 5700 km² and includes 15 municipalities : Azilal; Demnate Tilouguite Zawiya Ahançal Tabant Ait M'Hamed; Ait Taguella Agoudi N' Lkheir Ait Abbas; Ait Boulli; Ait Blal Sidi Boukhelf Tifni Anergui and Boutferda.

Contact: M'Goun Geopark Association, Azilal Morocco. www.geoparc-mgoun.ma



The M'Goun Geopark authentic experiences

This guide was produced as part of the TDSM Sustainable Tourism Switzerland Morocco programme, financed by the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, SMIT and the Beni-Mellal Khénifra region.



Conseil Régional
du Tourisme
Beni Mellal Khénifra



African
UNESCO Global
Geopark Network

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+80+4+ 1780.0K | CX81
GÉOPARC M'GOUN

