



Moroccan Delights 2019

30 SEPTEMBER TO 11 OCTOBER 2019



In late September 2019 I am leading a tour for 12 days through Morocco. Firstly this is a destination which you must really do in an organised group, as it would be a brave and very intrepid traveller to tackle it on your own. Secondly Morocco is one of the most exciting destinations. I've been here with groups many times now and every time it excites me just so much! I often feel like I've been eating lots of sugary sweets – it just stimulates you so much! From the crazy bustling noise of the markets and public squares, to the chanting of the “call to prayer”, to the magnificent colours and decorations of the medinas, to the peace and solitude of the desert, to the utter beauty of the mountains and the baroness of the plains, Morocco will make you smile and shake your head at the same time!



Casablanca, Morocco

Monday 30 September to Wednesday 2 October 2019

On Monday 30 September we will meet in Paris for our flight to Casablanca, Morocco. Following our arrival at the airport of Casablanca, we will transfer to our seaside hotel for our two nights.

On our full day here we will start by visiting the breath-taking Hassan Mosque in Casablanca – the largest mosque in Europe with a 200m high tower. Then following a tour of this mosque we are going to live out our “Casablanca” memories with a visit for lunch to the Rick’s Bar - the bar made famous by Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in the film “Casablanca”. We will then continue to explore this city before returning to our hotel.



Fes

Wednesday 2 October to Friday 4 October 2019

Today we will drive through to Fes via Rabat where we will stop to see the Royal Mausoleum, the Hassan Tower and leave for the ancient capital of Morocco, Meknes, where we will stop to see the Bab Mansour victory gate, and see the Royal Palace and then leave for Volubilis, where we will learn all about the Romans living here. We have the next two nights in Fes.

Fes is one of the ancient capitals of Morocco, and it will only excite you with its colours and vibrancy.

After breakfast in our riad, we will start an explorative journey of the cultural capital of Morocco, walking in its alleys and small streets. Our visit starts with a wander through the narrow streets of the Medina – an explosion of colour, sound and smells to excite your senses! We will visit all sites with cultural and historical interest including the famous Al Qaraouine University, the oldest in the region, as well as the food markets. After a couscous lunch,



we will visit an extraordinary pottery factory and have a panoramic view over the whole Medina of Fes. Then we will drive by the Royal Palace, the Jewish headquarter, the first Mellah ever built in Morocco. This is an absolutely amazing day!

Friday 4 October to Sunday 6 October 2019

Today will be a long day travelling from Fes to the deserts of the Middle Atlas mountains, but this day will be one of the most extraordinary days you will ever experience. This is a day of utterly unbelievable beauty and contrasts – you'll just want to keep taking photos! We will leave Fes travelling towards Ifran, referred to as "the Switzerland of Morocco" and then to Merzouga via Azrou and the Ziz Valley. During this journey we'll experience glimpses of the Middle Atlas and Higher Atlas mountains. Stopping at Azrou, a Berber village in the middle of the famous cedar forest - the largest in Morocco – where we should sight Barbary apes. You'll notice how the scenery changes to reveal hints of the desert as we approach the city of Errachidia. All through here you will see Berber tribesman living in their tents, following their nomadic lifestyles. Our



journey continues to Merzouga via the Tizi Ntalghamt pass and along the luxuriant Ziz Valley full of date palms, stopping for panoramic views along the way. We will arrive at Merzouga at the end of the afternoon. A long day, but unforgettable. You'll be welcomed with a glass of mint tea before we check in to our accommodation, and have dinner on the terrace overlooking the desert beyond.

For our next full day we'll visit the Gnawa people, originally slaves brought from Sudan, to experience their rhythmic and exciting music and their lifestyle. During the afternoon we are going to get on camels, and head to our desert campsite guided by an experienced camel man to explore the sand sea of Merzouga. Enjoy a wonderful sunset over the golden dunes before our camp-side dinner and then spend the night (equipped with flash toilets)! Quite an extraordinary evening you will have! Don't panic about the camels – they're quite comfortable and we're only on them for about an hour!

Sunday 6 October to Monday 7 October 2019

If you like, early in the morning, we will wake you up in our desert campsite to watch what well may be the best sunrise of your life! Afterwards, we'll peacefully camel-trek back to the village of Merzouga. Enroute you couldn't fail to appreciate the unique beauty of the spectacular Erg Chebbi sand dunes - changing with the light as the day wakens. We'll shower and have breakfast at our previous riad, then head off for Rissani, Tinghir, and the Todra gorges - the highest, narrowest gorges in Morocco. After lunch in the heart of the gorge we'll drive through the Dades Valley, where you'll see the majestic sand castles and the amazing rock formations known as "monkey toes". Overnight accommodation will be in a lovely hotel overlooking the Dades valley.



Monday 7 October to Wednesday 9 October 2019

After breakfast we will travel through the Dades Valley towards Kalaa M'gouna and Ouarzazat. The route through Dades Valley is the way of the thousand kasbahs – providing numerous opportunities to take some of your best photographic shots of the trip. Today we may have the opportunity to meet Berber Nomads in their caves and then enjoy the fertile Rose valley and the rock formations along the way. We'll stop at Kalaat M'gouna, "the rose city", to purchase rosewater, which will make your sheets smell beautiful long after your trip is over. Continue to Skoura and the birds' valley; visit the Kasbah Ameridil, a well-preserved kasbah in this area. On to Ouarzazate, and then our journey will continue through the majestic Tizi n'tichka Pass (2260m) over the High Atlas Mountains, before arriving at our accommodation in Marrakech, where we will spend the next two nights.



During our full day here we will explore Marrakech, "the red city of Morocco". Our local guide will ensure that we see the most important places of historical and cultural interest, including the Saadien tombs; the Palaces of El Bahia and El Badi; and the Ben Youssef Coranique School. Lunch at a restaurant near the square, a wander through the souks (markets) of Marrakech, as well as a wander across the famous Square of Jemaa el Fnaa – monkeys, snakes, and noise!!

Essaouira

Wednesday 9 October to Friday 11 October 2019

After breakfast at our Marrakech riad, we will drive to Essaouira on the coast, but before leaving the city we will make a visit to the Marjorelle Gardens of Yves Saint Laurent. En route we will see goats feeding in the Argan trees, and have a chance to see the making of Argan oil, which is the vital ingredient for making our skin as youthful as it used to be!

We will explore Essaouira during the day. We'll visit the Skala Fortress, the port, the souks and see Thuya wood carved by artisans; walk through the alleys of the medina and view hundreds of handicrafts, and wonderfully colourful Berber rugs – this is the place to pick up some special rugs!!

Essaouira knew many civilisations - including the Portuguese occupation, which affects much of its architecture - however, it remains a small village with much history. Because of its size and its characteristic blue doors and washed walls, it is also regarded as Morocco's "Jewel of the Atlantic".

While in Essaouira our hotel will be located in the heart of the ancient medina with spectacular views over the Atlantic Ocean. It is a complete contrast to anything you've already seen in Morocco and you will love the sea and the beaches, and altogether seems very much more French than elsewhere.

There will be plenty of time today to explore the markets of this seaside town, before we have a lazy long lunch on the beach; food and wine, camels, and kite surfers will entertain us!

Tour Ends

Friday 11 October 2019

Today our tour comes to an end. At the end of the tour we will organise flights out of Marrakech for places like London or Paris. Marrakech is a three hour drive from Essaouira. Our tour will end at the Marrakech Airport.

Hotels:

Throughout this tour we will be staying in four star hotels. In the desert in Merzouga we stay in a three star hotel and we spend one night in individual tents with mattresses and bedding. All hotels are equipped with air-conditioning and Wifi.

Touring:

All touring will be done in modern air-conditioned vehicles.

Costings:

For this 12 day tour the cost will be approx. 5,000 Euros (approx. \$NZ8400) per person. Single supplements are payable (approx. \$470pp) if you wish a room to yourself. Prices will be confirmed in late October 2018.

This costing includes all accommodation, breakfasts and dinners. All transportation and guiding (including guide/driver tips) is included in this price. Lunches are not included. All meals are without alcohol included, for being a strict Muslim country alcohol is regularly not served, except in certain circumstances, but you will love the mint tea!

Not included in this cost is the cost of air travel to and from Morocco. As an indication the cost of the flight from Paris to Morocco which I will be on will be approximately 60 to 80€. Please discuss your pre and post tour flight arrangements with me prior to making any bookings. I will be flying out of Paris to give you the opportunity to travel with me to Morocco. If you wish to arrive in Casablanca independently this is fine, but it would be more convenient to arrive at a time close to when I arrive.

Deposits:

I will need a deposit of 1000 Euros per person (approx.\$NZ1500) from each person to confirm your place, with the final balance payable 8 weeks before the start date. On payment of deposit you will be required to have travel cancellation insurance in place.