



MOROCCO 2017

WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER TO SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER 2017



Our Travel Philosophy

In early October 2017 I am leading a tour 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 a number of times now and every time it feels like I've been eating lots of sugary sweets – it just excites you! 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!

Wednesday 4 October

This morning we will meet at our Casablanca hotel. I will be travelling from Nice Airport (France) to Casablanca if anyone wants to join me on this flight!

Following our arrival at the airport of Casablanca, we will transfer to our seaside hotel.



Thursday 5 October

This morning we will drive to Fes via Rabat where we will stop to see the Mausoleum, the Hassan Tower and leave for the ancient capital of Morocco, Meknes, where we will stop for lunch and 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 colour and vibrancy.



Friday 6 October

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 by the Royal Palace, the Jewish headquarter, the first Mellah ever built in Morocco. We will visit all sites with cultural and historical interest including the famous Al Qaraouine University, the oldest in the region, and the Tanneries. After a couscous lunch, we will visit an extraordinary pottery factory and have a panoramic view over the whole Medina of Fes. This is an amazing day!

Saturday 7 October

Today will be a long day travelling to the deserts, but this day will be one of the most extraordinary days you will ever experience. This is a day of utter disbelieving 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 , 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.

Sunday 8 October

After breakfast in the hotel we will start exploring the area. We’ll visit the Gnawa people, originally slaves brought from Sudan, to experience their rhythmic and exciting music and their lifestyle. Not far away there’s the lake of Merzouga, with its bird populations. We may also visit the nomad wire house where many Berber handicrafts are priced lower than in the big cities. During the afternoon we will get on our camels, and head to our campsite guided by an experienced camel man to explore the sand sea of Merzouga. Enjoy a wonderful sunset over the golden dunes and spend the night equipped with flash toilets!



Monday 9 October

If you like, early in the morning, we will wake you up 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 progresses. After breakfast in the riad, we’ll 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.



Tuesday 10 October

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.

Wednesday 11 October

After breakfast in the riad, we will start exploring 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, then in the afternoon visit the gardens at Majorelle; Menara and the Koutoubia tower.

Thursday 12 October

After breakfast at our Marrakech riad, we will drive to Essaouira on the coast. En route we will see goats feeding in the Argan trees, and we will visit a cooperative which specialises in processing the nuts of the Argan tree to create Argan oil, which is the vital ingredient for making our skin as youthful as it used to be!

We will explore this town 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.

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 Atlantics.

While in Essaouira our hotel will be located in the heart of the ancient medina. 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.



Friday 13 October

Today we will spend enjoying Essaouira.

Saturday 14 October

Today our tour comes to an end. At the end of the tour it is most convenient, and an option, to fly out of Essaouira for Paris. Similarly you can organise flights out of Marrakech for places like London. Marrakech is a three hour drive from Essaouira.

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 11 day tour the cost will be 4,850 Euros (approx. \$NZ7460) per person. Single supplements are payable (approx. \$470pp) if you wish a room to yourself.

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 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 Morocco. As an indication the cost of the flight from Nice to Morocco which I will be on will be approximately 80€. There are tickets for flights from Marrakech to Paris at approx 60€. Please discuss your pre and post tour flight arrangements with me prior to making any bookings. If possible I would prefer to coordinate these flights with you, so that we all arrive in Casablanca at about the same time.

Deposits

I will need a deposit of \$1500 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.

Please contact me if you have any questions or queries:

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