



# Around Morocco Tours

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## The Morocco Grand Tour

This 16-day expedition includes the highlights of Morocco. The guided tour starts and ends in Casablanca. It includes the Moroccan imperial cities of Rabat, Fes, Meknes and Marrakech. You'll visit the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert, the valleys and the gorges, the ocean and the countryside. If you want to learn about Moroccan culture and landscape diversity, then do not hesitate to take this tour. You will learn about Moroccan history, culture and enjoy the diversity of the Moroccan landscape.

Our Morocco Grand Tour can start either in Casablanca or Tanger, depending on the way you enter Morocco. Also, if you do not have enough time to take the whole tour, we can customize it for you depending on the length of your vacation in Morocco.

### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Casablanca - Rabat

You arrive at Casablanca airport, where we will meet you and drive to Casablanca, and then to Rabat. In Casablanca, you will see the Hassan II Mosque, the largest mosque outside Mecca. Continuing to Rabat - the capital of Morocco - you will see the Hassan Tower and walk the Oudaya Kasbah before you check in to your overnight accommodation in a hotel or riad.

#### Day 2: Rabat - Assilah - Chefchaouen

After breakfast in your accommodation, we will drive to Chefchaouen via the city of Assilah. Most of the drive will be by the coast. Our first stop will be in Assilah, where you will have the opportunity to explore the city. Assilah is known for its annual festival for the art - most of the walls of the Medina are painted by various famous artists from all over the world.

Your visit includes the Skalla fortress, where you will experience a wonderful view of the Medina and the ocean. If time permits, you will have a drive through Tanger to get a feel of the city. Afterwards you will continue over the foothills of the Rif Mountains to Chefchaouen. Overnight in hotel or riad.

**Day 3: Exploring Chefchaouen**

After breakfast in your riad, you will start exploring the Chefchaouen “The blue city of Morocco”. Situated at the footstep of 2 higher mountains, Chefchaouen is a beautiful unique city, with its white washed walls and blue doors and windows. Unlike many parts of Morocco, Chefchaouen was occupied by Spain; therefore there is much influence from the Spanish civilisation and Moorish architecture. In the afternoon you will have your own time. This provides the opportunity to wander around unguided or just enjoy some time to yourselves. Overnight in hotel or riad.

**Day 4: Chefchaouen – Volubilis – Meknes - Fes**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, you will start travelling to Fes via Ouazzan and the Roman site of Volubilis. After a couple of hours drive, you will get to Volubilis, the well preserved Roman empire dating to 225 BC, where you will see the most beautiful Mosaics in Morocco dating back to 3rd century BC. Here you will have a guided tour of the site and learn a lot about the Roman Empire.

After that we travel to Meknes, the Ismaili capital of Morocco. In Meknes we see the fascinating gate Bab Mansour built by the sultan My Ismail; the granary and the Sahrij Souani, used for irrigation and plantation. Your visit includes also the Mulay Ismail Mausoleum. We then continue via the highway to Fes. Overnight accommodation at hotel or riad.

**Day 5: Exploring Fes**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, you will start exploring Fes the “the Spritual City of Morocco”. You will spend the whole morning exploring the Medina and its alleys; visiting most of the sites with cultural and historical interest - including the famous Al Karaouine Mosque and University (the oldest in the world), the Medrasa Bouanania, the Tanneries and the Najjarine fountain.

After lunch, we will drive you outside the Medina to see the Royal Palace gate, walk through the Jewish quarter “the Mellah”, and then visit the pottery cooperative. In the afternoon, we will drive you to one of the fortresses to experience an amazing panoramic view of the whole Medina of Fes. Overnight accommodation at hotel or riad.

**Day 6: Fes – Azrou - Midlet - Ziz Valley - Merzouga**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, you'll start travelling southeast to Merzouga via Midelt and Errachidia. Your first stop will be at Ifran, referred to as "the Switzerland of Morocco", and then to Merzouga via Midlet and the Ziz Valley. During this journey you'll experience glimpses of the Middle Atlas and Higher Atlas Mountains. Stopping at the famous cedar forest - the largest in Morocco – where you may well sight Barbarian apes. You'll notice how the scenery changes to reveal hints of the desert as you approach the city Er Rachidia.

After lunch in Midelt, your journey continues along the luxuriant Ziz Valley, stopping for panoramic views along the way. We will drive through welcoming Berber villages to Erfoud, and then Rissani, the foundation of the Alaouite dynasty - the current ruling royal family in Morocco. Arriving in Merzouga at the end of the day, you'll be welcomed with a glass of mint tea before you check in to your hotel or riad.

**Day 7: Merzouga area and the Camel trek**

After breakfast in the hotel or riad, you will start an explorative journey of the area. You'll visit the Gnawa people, originally slaves brought from Sudan, to experience their music and lifestyle. Not far away there's the lake of Merzouga, with its bird populations. You may also visit the souk in Rissani, a traditional town which was the origin of the ruling family in Morocco and the meeting place of the Caravans trading as far as Timbuctou in Mali.

Here you will see a lot of men hooded and women veiled. In the afternoon you will start your guided camel ride, led by an experienced camel man to explore within the sand sea of Merzouga. Overnight at our desert camp where you will have your dinner. For your convenience, the camp is equipped with flush toilets.

**Day 8: Merzouga - Todra Gorges - Dades Gorges (260 km)**

Early in the morning your camel guide will wake you up to watch what well may be the best sunrise of your life. Afterwards you will 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 your hotel or riad, you'll leave for the Dades Valley, visiting Todra Gorges - the highest, narrowest gorges in Morocco.

After lunch within the valley, you will have an optional hour's hike through the fields where you will enjoy visiting an old mud village, meet locals and learn about the culture. On through Dades Valley, where you will have the opportunity to see majestic

sandcastles and the amazing rock formations known as "monkey toes". Overnight accommodation will be in a hotel or riad.

## **Day 9: Dades Gorge – Rose Valley - Ouarzazat (140 km)**

After breakfast in the hotel or riad, we'll drive 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. We'll stop at Kalaa Mgouna, "the rose city", to purchase the rosewater, which will make your linen smell good a long time after your trip is over. Continue to Skoura and the dirds valley; visit the Kasbah Ameridil, a well-preserved kasbah in this area.

After lunch, you will have some time for hiking within the valley and then continue to Ouarzazate - "the Hollywood of Africa"- whose geography and beautiful landscapes have attracted many world class movie producers. Overnight accommodation will be in a hotel or riad.

## **Day 10: Ouarzazat - Ait Ben Haddou Kasbah- Taroudant**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, we'll head to Taroudant via Taznakht, visiting Ait Ben Haddou Kasbah, the largest Kasbah in Morocco. Built during the beginning of the XXth Century by T-hami El Glaoui -one of the last Berber chieftains -Ben Haddou Kasbah used to be one of his stops during his long travel from the sub-Saharan countries to Marrakech, and is now a UNESCO world heritage site. On to Taliouine, the capital of saffron in Morocco, you have the option to visit the Safran co-operative.

If your visit coincides with the saffron harvest, you will have the opportunity to meet the Berber people with their families harvesting the saffron in their fields. We should arrive at Taroudant in the afternoon, here you will see the ramparts and walk within the small alleys in the Medina. Taroudant is always referred to as "The little Marrakech" because it was the built by the Saadian dynasty who used it as their capital before they moved to Marrakech in the 16th century . Overnight at a hotel or riad.

**Day 11: Taroudant - Agadir - Essaouira**

Breakfast in the hotel or riad, and then head for Essaouira, travelling via Agadir. Our first stop will be at Agadir, a resort city which was a very big tourist destination for many years. After lunch and a small walk along the Promenade, you will continue to Essaouira. The coastal road offers beautiful scenery, an area famous for the Argan trees.

Here you will see herds of goats climbing the Argan trees looking for better food than they can find on the ground. After several stops along the coast we get to Essaouira in the afternoon. Overnight accommodation in a hotel or riad.

**Day 12: Exploring Essaouira**

Breakfast at the hotel or riad in Essaouira, then start our explorative journey of the city. You'll visit the Skala Fortress; see Thuya wood carved by artisans; walk through the alleys of the medina and view hundreds of handicrafts. Today you will have lunch in a Moroccan way, freshly bought fishes 'cooked to order'. In the afternoon, you will have some free time to wander around, go to the beach and enjoy time to yourselves.

Essaouira is also referred to as The "City of the Wind" and it attracts surfers from all over the world. 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". There is an annual festival of "Gnawa music", where many musical groups come from different parts of Africa and the world. Usually it starts in the second week of June. Overnight accommodation in a hotel or riad.

**Day 13: Essaouira - Marrakech**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, you will have some free time before leaving for Marrakech. On our way - since this is the land of Argan culture - this is an opportunity to visit the women's co-operative of Argan oil where they extract the oil that is famous for its culinary, cosmetic and medical properties. After several stops to take photographs, you will continue your travel to Marrakech and check in to your hotel or riad.

After dinner you will have the option to enjoy walking within the famous square of Jemaa El fna, entertained with magicians, story tellers, musicians and snake charmers. Overnight in a hotel or riad.

## **Days 14 & 15: Exploring Marrakech**

After breakfast in the hotel or riad, you can start exploring Marrakech "the Red City of Morocco". Your guide will ensure that you see most of the sites with historical and cultural interest - including the famous Jemaa El Fna square, the Koutoubia Mosque, the Saadian tombs; the Palace of Bahia and the Ben Youssef Coranic School. Lunch at a restaurant near the square, then in the afternoon visit the Majorelle Gardens, and have a short visit to the new city of Marrakech and the Koutoubia tower.

During the next day you will have the option to try a Moroccan Hammam, a cooking class and some free time to explore the city on your own. Overnight accommodation will be in a hotel or riad.

## **Day 16: Marrakech and Departure**

After breakfast in your hotel or riad, we will drive you to the airport for your departure flight. Your tour ends at the airport.