

# Your passport to adventure

# **Desert & Kasbahs**

Country(ies): Morocco

Tour type: Private

Transport: AC minibus/coach & 4WD landcruiser style

vehicles

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 0

Days: 8 days

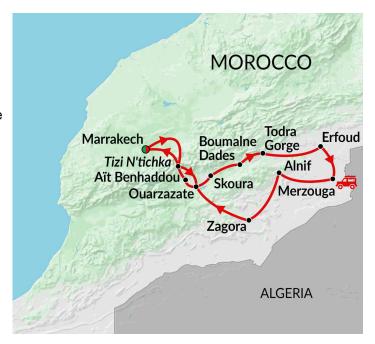
Start Location: Marrakech, Morocco

End Location: Marrakech, Morocco

Meals: Breakfasts - 7, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 7

#### **Highlights:**

Djemaa El Fna Square in Marrakech, high Atlas mountains, Tizi n Tichka pass, Merzouga Desert, Ait Benhaddou, Ouarzazate, desert sands at Zagora



# **Itinerary**

### Day 1: Welcome to Marrakech. Transfer to hotel

On your arrival in Marrakech airport (RAK) our representative will greet you and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to settle in, relax after your flight, and have a first look around. Extra nights are available on request.

**OVERNIGHT:** Marrakech hotel

**MEALS:** Dinner

**EXTRAS:** Single Room Supplement (MOSGDK)

### Day 2: Exploring Marrakech

Unearth the secrets of Marrakech, beginning in the medina, the old walled section of town and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This thousand-year-old city was long a political, economic and cultural center. Marvel at its architectural jewels, including the soaring Koutoubia minaret. Continue to the Bahia Palace, an exemplary of privileged life in the 19th century, the Tiskiwin Museum (Maison Tiskiwin), which houses an impressive collection of North African arts and crafts. The museum, which was founded by a Dutch anthropologist, is organized into geographically themed exhibits, with each room focusing on artifacts from different towns and regions along the ancient trade route from Marrakech to Timbuktu. The works on display include exquisite hand-woven carpets and textiles, traditional Berber clothing and jewelry, intricate basketwork and tribal handicrafts. Later you visit Djemaa el-Fna, Marrakech's main square, which is filled with orange juice stalls and vendors, along with fire-eaters, mime artists, snake-charmers and street musicians performing at every turn. You may also take the opportunity to explore the city's fabled, labyrinthine souks, their bustling alleyways brimming with all manner of wares. Following your visit, return to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure, a perfect opportunity to freshen up and get ready for a dinner in a local restaurant. Return to your hotel and overnight.

**OVERNIGHT:** Marrakech hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 3: To Dades via Skoura

As you leave Marrakech, ahead into the High Atlas Mountains. Our route follows the same one caravans used centuries ago, to bring into Marrakech gold and precious wood from the other side of the ocean of sand, the Sahara. You will be crossing Tizi n Tichka pass, at 2260 meters high. Once over the pass you will get an amazing panoramic views of the Atlas Mountains and the houses of its indigenous villages. Continue to Ouarzazate and stop for a lunch (own expense). Onto yet another lush area, nested between the deserted crest and the desolate plateaus: Skoura palm grove. Then, our trip reaches Kelaa des Mgouna, famous for the nearby Valley of Roses and 'Rose Festival', where at the end of a 3 day celebration usually held in May, a local girl is crowned 'Rose Queen'. The most looked after product is eaude-rose and two factories in the area distil and export the product. Further on, Boulmane Dades follows, the starting point to explore the spectacular Dades Gorge, a lush carpet set against the massive rocks and guite popular among those interested to trek. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

**OVERNIGHT:** Dades hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

### Day 4: Todra Gorge, Tinghir and Merzouga

Back on the road, our first stop is Tinerhir (Tinghir), with its extensive palm grove, the ksours built into the rocky hills above it and its mysterious decaying Jewish quarter. Tinghir has been for generations a stop for nomadic Berber tribes travelling from the mountains north of it towards the desert during the winter months. A rather inconspicuous hidden gem is the 19th century adobe mosque nested within the old crumbling ksour, a heaven for photography enthusiasts. Todra Gorges, lie only 15 km from Tinghir, presenting an arresting spectacle with its crystal clear river emerging from it, its huge walls changing color to magical effect as the day unfolds. Its 300 metres (1000 feet) high walls are home to more than 150 bolted routes and at any time of day you can catch a glimpse of someone rock climbing his way up the gigantic walls.

Before reaching Merzouga where the tarmac ends, we pass Erfoud and Rissani. In Erfoud we may stop for a visit at Musee des Oasis (optional) if time allows. Rissani used to serve as last stop on the great caravan routes south and gold and slave auctions were taking place here as late as 1800's. Before it, the caravan trade and the most important city in Morocco was Sijilmassa, the ruins of which lie opposite Rissani. From its gates, Ibn Battuta and Leo Africanus left Morocco to embark on their illustrious journeys across the Sahara into African countries. Soon after we reach Merzouga and in the distance you glimpse the first leviathans of sand forming the Sahara: the dunes of Erg Chebbi. Dinner and overnight at your hotel. A special night camping under the starts in a comfortable Berber camp on the edge of the dunes is available tonight (includes 4x4 transfers from Erfoud and a sunrise camel ride).

**OVERNIGHT:** Merzouga Kasbah or Riad

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 5: To Zagora via the Amazigh villages of Alnif & Tazarine

Enjoy an optional sunrise camel ride along the golden sand dunes in Merzouga. Return to your Riad for breakfast before transferring to Zagora via the Amazigh villages of Alnif and Tazarine. The road to Tazzarine sees almost no traffic, providing a scenic link between Tafilalet and Draa Valley. Aside from the landscape, fossils and prehistoric rock carvings are this region's main attraction. The scenery grows wilder as you approach Tazzarine, set in a grassy oasis surrounded by bare mountains. Continue to Zagora. Famous for its largest palm valley in Morocco. Dinner and overnight in your hotel.

**OVERNIGHT:** Zagora hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 6: To Agdez and Ouarzazate

After breakfast, enjoy the tour of Zagora including some of the oldest villages in Morocco. Stop by Tamegroute to visit the village's famous library, which houses ancient Koranic scripts dating back to the 12th century. Visit the pottery section of Tamgroute then transfer to Ouarzazate along the Draa valley. Optional lunch stop at Agdez then continue the trip to Ouarzazate for dinner and overnight.

**OVERNIGHT:** Ouarzazate hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

### Day 7: Return to Marrakech via Ait Benhaddou

Begin the day by exploring Ouarzazate, a city originally built as a French garrison in the 1920s. Today, the city is a regional trade center, known for its pottery and carpets. See the Taourirt Kasbah, which now consists of simple clay houses and crenellated towers that are beautifully decorated with geometric motifs. On the way, optional visit to the Film studios. Continue to elaborate Aït Benhaddou, dubbed a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home of the region's most exotic kasbahs, where structures all but defy the laws of gravity as they perch upon the steep slope. Some of these buildings have been featured in films, including Lawrence of Arabia and Gladiator. You journey over the High Atlas Mountains, observing everyday life in remote rural towns, to the fascinating city of Marrakech. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

**OVERNIGHT:** Marrakech hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS**:

### Day 8: Your Morrocan adventure comes to an end

Your day is free today to do some last minute shopping or exploring in Marrakech, before we transfer you back to the airport to board your flight back home.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Marrakech - post-tour

#### Included:

- Accommodation in boutique hotels, kasbahs & riads
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- English speaking escort driver
- Specialist English speaking guides for sightseeing tours
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Entrances fees to monuments and sites visited

#### **Excluded:**

- International flights
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Optional desert camp and sunrise camel ride
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guide & driver
- Any other items not mentioned above

#### **Notes**

#### **Hotel Gala Dinners**

Many of Morocco's better hotels arrange a very special gala dinner with entertainment in the evening on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Payment for these is normally optional on Christmas Eve (24 Dec) but may be compulsory on New Year's Eve (31 Dec), whether you attend or not. Prices can range from around US\$30 to over US\$100 per person. Final decisions on prices and whether dinners are compulsory are made relatively close to the time. We aim to always select hotels that make their Gala Dinners optional, though this is is not always possible. Gala dinner prices are therefore not included in our prices above, but will be added to your booking if they become required. This generally will only apply if you add a hotel upgrade to your booking. More information is available on request.

# **Options**

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## **No Options**

#### 1. Accommodation

We use a good quality boutique style 4-star hotel in Marrakech, and then more traditional riad and kasbah style hotels for the rest of the tour. A guide to the normal hotels used on the tour is given on our website. However, these may be substituted for similar style accommodations at the same level subject to availability. If you would like to guarantee specific hotels for the tour, please mention this to us at the time of booking.

For the night in the desert near Merzouga, we stay at a deluxe Berber camp. This has permanent goat hair tents, which are fully furnished with proper beds and bedding, and en-suite bathrooms and toilets.

Upgrades to deluxe 5-star hotels and riads are also available on this tour on request. Please contact us for details and prices.

#### 2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour.

This tour therefore uses private AC 4WD AC landcruiser style vehicles (eg. Toyota Prado - window seats guaranteed) for the journey into the desert. If you are travelling in a larger party, we may use a different type of minivan or minibus suitable for your numbers.

#### 3. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

This is a private tour, and as such is available for any number of travellers. Pricing shown on our website is based on 4 people travelling together. However, customised pricing is also available on request based on the number of people in your party and the types of rooms required (eg. any children, extra beds etc.).

The tour is run with an English speaking escort driver, with a specialist guide used for your city tour in Marrakech. Your escort driver will be able to discuss your plans for the day, make minor adjustments to your itinerary as you go along, talk about local life in Morocco and help you with meals, shopping etc. They will also be able to talk a little about the places you are visiting and their history, but they are not fully licensed professional guides so these explanations will be limited. You will be able to arrange extra site guides at some of the sites you visit along the way (for example if you visit the Taourit Kasbah in Ouarzazate). For groups of 5 or more, we normally provide a driver and a licensed escort guide for the entire tour.

At Encounters Travel we only use local Moroccan guides and drivers. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing and many people describe our Moroccan guides as one of the highlights of their holiday.

#### 4. Dates & Prices

This is a private tour, and as such is available for any number of travellers. Pricing shown on our website is based on 4 people travelling together. However, customised pricing is also available on request based on the number of people in your party and the types of rooms required (eg. any children, extra beds required etc.).

Printed on: Saturday 15th of November 2025

**Note:** Please  $\underline{\text{download an up-to-date copy}}$  of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.