

Morocco on a Shoestring

Country(ies): Morocco

Tour type: Shoestring

Transport: AC Minivan, Minibus or 4x4

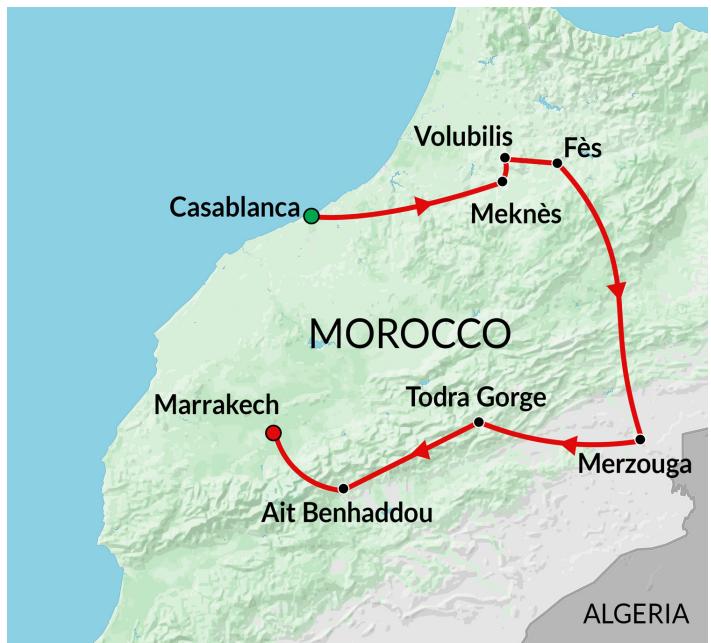
Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 8 days

Start Location: Casablanca, Morocco

End Location: Marrakech, Morocco

Meals: Breakfasts - 7, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 1



Highlights:

Views of the impressive Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Historic Ismailian capital of Meknes, Roman ruins at Volubilis, Mazy souks of imperial Fes, Todra Gorge, Djemaa El Fna Square in Marrakech

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive into Casablanca. Airport Transfer is included

Welcome to Morocco! We will meet you on your arrival in Casablanca airport and transfer you to the hotel. Your time is then free to relax or explore Casablanca a little independently if you arrive early.

We will then have a welcome meeting with the tour guide at 6.00pm where you will meet your fellow travellers. If you arrive late and miss this meeting then we will make the introductions again tomorrow morning.

OVERNIGHT: Casablanca hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Single room supplement - Standard Hotels (MOSHSH) Extra day in Morocco - pre-tour (EXSGMO)

Day 2: Exploring Casablanca, Meknes and Volubilis. Head to Fes

Our journey begins with the breathtaking Hassan II Mosque, an architectural masterpiece that rises dramatically beside the Atlantic. You'll have the option to step inside and marvel at its intricate details and sheer grandeur (optional visit, not included). Afterward, stroll along the vibrant La Corniche, soaking up the sun and the lively atmosphere of this seaside promenade.

Next, we venture to Meknes, where a delicious community village lunch awaits. Immerse yourself in the warm hospitality of local life as you savor traditional flavors.

Our afternoon takes us back in time to the ancient Roman ruins of Volubilis, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Explore this sprawling complex with a knowledgeable guide, who will unveil the secrets of this once-thriving city.

As dusk approaches, we arrive in Fes, a captivating city that seems to have been plucked straight from the pages of a storybook. You'll explore the city tomorrow, but this evening you'll have the choice of a myriad of dining experiences for a memorable evening. Perhaps you'll savor a tagine under a canopy of stars or sip refreshing mint tea in a traditional teahouse.

OVERNIGHT: Fes hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Exploring ancient Fes

Today, prepare to be transported back in time as we embark on a guided tour of Fes, the oldest imperial city in Morocco. Our expert guide will lead you through the labyrinthine alleyways of the medina, a UNESCO World Heritage site that teems with life. Imagine a place where the rhythm of daily life is dictated by the clip-clop of donkey hooves and the calls of street vendors, where the air is filled with the intoxicating aromas of spices, perfumes, and freshly baked bread. This is Fes el Bali, the heart of the city, home to over 400,000 people and a mesmerizing blend of sights, sounds, and experiences.

As you wander through the narrow streets, you'll encounter architectural wonders – ornate mosques with soaring minarets, ancient madrasas (Islamic schools), and opulent palaces. While only Muslims can enter the mosques,

their beauty can be admired from the outside. Our guide will share fascinating insights into the history and culture of Fes, pointing out hidden gems and local secrets.

We'll delve into the bustling souks, where artisans practice time-honored crafts. Witness the vibrant colors of the dyers' souk, where fabrics are transformed in ancient vats. Experience the pungent aromas of the tanneries, where leather is treated using traditional methods. Discover the fascinating world of herbal remedies in a traditional pharmacy, and admire the intricate designs of handcrafted pottery.

After a day of exploration, return to your hotel to relax and refresh. Tonight, we offer an optional traditional dinner, where you'll enjoy a delectable feast while being entertained by captivating live performances – traditional music, mesmerizing belly dancing, and skilled magicians will create an unforgettable ambiance. Alternatively you'll have the evening free to explore and dine at your own leisure.

OVERNIGHT: Fes hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 4: The Sahara awaits! Camel Trek and berber desert camp

Today, adventure awaits! We embark on a thrilling journey to the legendary Sahara Desert, a vast expanse of golden sand dunes that has captivated explorers and dreamers for centuries. Anticipation builds as we travel through ever-changing landscapes, with dramatic mountains giving way to the mesmerizing ochre hues of the desert.

Along the way, we'll make a stop for an optional lunch, allowing you to savor delicious Moroccan cuisine and recharge for the exciting experiences ahead. During the summer months, you might even have the opportunity to cool off with a refreshing swim in a crystal-clear oasis, a true desert paradise.

As the day progresses, we'll arrive at the awe-inspiring Erg Chebbi dunes in Merzouga, where a caravan of camels awaits. Prepare to embark on an unforgettable camel trek into the heart of the Sahara. Feel the gentle sway of these magnificent creatures as you traverse the undulating dunes, leaving the world behind with each step.

The highlight of our desert adventure is witnessing a breathtaking sunset over the Sahara. Imagine the sky ablaze with fiery oranges, reds, and purples as the sun dips below the horizon, casting long shadows across the endless sea of sand. Capture this magical moment with your camera or simply soak it all in, creating a memory that will last a lifetime.

As twilight descends, we'll reach our authentic Berber camp, nestled amidst the dunes. Experience the warm hospitality of the Berber people as you settle into your traditional tent, a cozy haven under the star-studded sky. A delicious dinner featuring local specialties will be served, followed by an evening of captivating entertainment. Gather around the campfire, listen to the rhythmic beats of Berber music, and gaze up at the Milky Way, a celestial spectacle that is simply breathtaking in the clear desert air.

Please note that to ensure the well being of camels used on this tour, we have the following policies in place:

- Our camels are only used for approximately 1 hour, once per day.
- Camels are free to roam throughout the day and have access to food and water.
- No camels younger than 4 years old are used for camel rides.
- We have a policy of only 1 rider per camel.
- All camels are regularly vet checked.

OVERNIGHT: Berber desert camp

MEALS: Breakfast,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Visit the Todra Gorge with time for hiking

Wake up to a beautiful sunrise over the Sahara and enjoy breakfast in the dunes. You'll then have some free time to explore or join a desert excursion.

Later, we'll drive to the Todra Gorge, one of Morocco's most spectacular natural wonders. This impressive canyon, carved by the Todra River, boasts towering limestone cliffs that reach heights of up to 1,000 feet. The gorge stretches for over 40 kilometers, but the most dramatic section is a narrow passage where the cliffs close in to just 33 feet wide at some points.

You can spend the afternoon hiking along the riverbed, admiring the sheer rock walls and the unique rock formations. Be sure to explore the Todra Palmeraie, a lush oasis with palm trees and a small river. It's a great place to relax, enjoy the shade, and watch local life. The gorge is also a popular spot for rock climbing, with hundreds of routes for climbers of all abilities.

As the sun moves across the sky, the colours of the gorge change dramatically, creating a stunning spectacle that's perfect for photography.

OVERNIGHT: Todra Gorge hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Optional Film Studios visit and tour of Ait Benhaddou

Today's journey takes us from the Todra Gorge to the historic village of Ait Benhaddou. We'll journey through the scenic landscapes, making a stop to purchase lunch. In Ouarzazate, film enthusiasts can choose to partake in an optional tour of the Atlas Film Studios, where blockbusters like *Gladiator*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *Game of Thrones* were filmed. You can explore movie sets and learn about the filmmaking process.

Our final destination, Ait Benhaddou, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a masterpiece of Moroccan earthen architecture. This fortified village, with its towering kasbahs and maze-like alleyways, has been a backdrop for many films itself. This afternoon, you'll have a guided tour to explore this fascinating site and learn about its history as a trading post on the caravan route. You'll see how some of the kasbahs are still inhabited today, offering a glimpse into traditional Berber life. And for a truly immersive experience, consider joining our optional tagine cooking class where you'll learn to prepare this classic Moroccan dish.

OVERNIGHT: Ait Benhaddou hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Cross the Atlas Mountains to Marrakech and join a guided tour of the city

Today, we embark on a breathtaking journey through the High Atlas Mountains, winding our way up to the dramatic Tizi n'Tichka pass. At an altitude of 2,260 meters (7,415 feet), this mountain pass offers awe-inspiring panoramic views. Be sure to have your camera ready to capture the rugged peaks, deep valleys, and traditional Berber villages that dot the landscape.

As we descend from the mountains, the vibrant city of Marrakech awaits. This imperial city, known as the "Red City" for its distinctive ochre-colored buildings, is a feast for the senses. Its iconic landmark, the Koutoubia Mosque, with its towering minaret, is a masterpiece of Almohad architecture. Interestingly, its design influenced other famous towers, including the Hassan Tower in Rabat and the Giralda in Seville.

No visit to Marrakech is complete without experiencing the UNESCO-listed medina, a labyrinth of narrow alleyways that teem with life. Here, you'll find a treasure trove of souks (markets) overflowing with colorful textiles, aromatic spices, handcrafted jewelry, and traditional crafts. Our guided tour will lead you through this vibrant maze, revealing hidden gems and local secrets.

We'll also visit the Bahia Palace, an opulent 19th-century palace that showcases the exquisite artistry and craftsmanship of Moroccan architecture. Marvel at its intricate mosaics, carved stucco, and tranquil courtyards. (Please note that the entrance fee to the Bahia Palace is excluded).

Our tour culminates in the Djemaa el-Fna, the heart of Marrakech and one of the most captivating public squares in the world. This bustling marketplace comes alive with storytellers, musicians, snake charmers, and food stalls, creating a mesmerizing spectacle of sights, sounds, and aromas.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy at your leisure. Perhaps you'll relax by the pool, wander through the souks in search of souvenirs, or simply soak up the atmosphere of this magical city.

OVERNIGHT: Marrakech hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Tour ends in Marrakech

Your Moroccan tour with us ends after breakfast today and your time is free until you depart. Our guide or the hotel will help you arrange a taxi for the short drive to the airport, or you can add extra days to explore Marrakech further if you wish.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Morocco - post-tour (EXSGMO)

Included:

- 24hr arrival airport transfer service
- Accommodation in 3-star hotels
- 1 night in an authentic Berber Desert Camp
- Transport by air conditioned 4x4 or minibus
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Guided tours of Marrakech, Ait Benhaddou, Fes & Volubillis
- Entrance fees for included sightseeing
- English speaking tour guide, plus driver
- Sahara camel trek

Excluded:

- International flights
- Travel insurance (mandatory)

- Visas
- Tipping kitty - USD 50
- Departure Airport Transfer
- Tour guide tips
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks & personal expenses
- Optional activities

Notes

Hotel Gala Dinners

Many of Morocco's higher level hotels arrange a very special gala dinner with entertainment in the evening of New Year's Eve. Payment for these is compulsory whether you attend or not and is included in our tour prices.

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.

Single room supplement - Standard Hotels (MOSHSH)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

This option is applicable to those requiring a single room who have booked standard level accommodation.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Extra day in Morocco - pre-tour (EXSGMO)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Morocco - post-tour (EXSGMO)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is not included, but can be easily arranged through your hotel or with the help of your tour guide. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Locally Available Options (Morocco on a Shoestring)

Min numbers: 1

We offer a range of locally available options on this tour, these can be booked via your tour guide once you are in Morocco. Prices are per person, quoted in Moroccan Dirhams and may be subject to change.

- Hammam spa in Marrakech (prices from 150 DH)
- Hot Air Balloon ride over the High Atlas Mountains (2000 DH)
- Dinner and an Evening's Entertainment in Fes (300 DH)
- Cooking class in Ait Benhaddou (300 DH)
- Visit to Film Studio in Ouarzazate (80 DH)
- Merzouga land cruiser desert excursion (700 DH)
- Bahia Palace entrance (100 DH)
- El Badi Palace (80 DH)
- Hassan II Mosque (140 DH)

1. Accommodation

We use good quality mid-range tourist class hotels on this tour, rated at the local Moroccan 4-star level (local star ratings may vary slightly from international standards). Upgrades are available to higher "Comfort" and "Superior" levels on request (please see the dates and prices tab for pricing). If some people take up this upgrade there will be multiple hotel pick-ups and drop-offs each day, though we do aim to use hotels as close together as possible to minimise any extra travelling time. Example accommodations for each category can be found below, though other hotels of the same level may be used.

Standard Hotels:

Casablanca - Novotel / Imperial
Fez - Menzah Zalagh / Volubilis
Marrakech - Zalagh Kasbah / Rawabi

Comfort Hotels:

Casablanca - Movenpick Mogador Marina
Fez - Zalgh Parc / Les Merinides
Marrakech - Palm Plaza / Imperial Holidays

Superior Hotels:

Casablanca - Kenzi Tower / Grand Mogador City Centre
Fez - Heritage Boutique / Palais Medina
Marrakech - Kenzi Rose Garden / JAAL

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

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. The terrain and public transport options in Morocco mean that we use private AC minibuses or coaches throughout this tour, subject to the final size of the group.

3. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

On our Shoestring tours we allow for larger groups than our other trips, and while the average group size tends to be around 8-12 people, this tour can run with a maximum of 45 travellers on a large coach (this will be reduced according to the local regulations as part of our Safer Encounters scheme). We may also share this departure with travellers booking through other operators so you may join with travellers booking with different companies and from different countries. This can make for some really interesting groups and new people to meet. The minimum number of travellers required for the tour to run is 2.

The tour is led by a qualified, dual-lingual guide and a driver. This allows for explanations to be given in two languages to accommodate both English speakers and travellers with another first language. Specialist local guides may also be used in some locations to provide more site specific information.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local Moroccan guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing and many people rate our Moroccan guides as one of the highlights of their tour.

4. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Saturdays throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run if a minimum of 2 travellers is reached. If we do not reach this minimum number (which happens very rarely), or other local reasons mean we cannot run the tour, then we will offer you the option to either pay a small supplement to do the tour exactly as planned but privately, to change your date, to transfer to another tour, or we will provide you with a full refund. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and in our brochure. Please check the website for the most up-to-date prices and any special offers.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
