



Souks, Sand Dunes & Surf

Country(ies): Morocco

Tour type: Family

Transport: A/C minibus/coach & 4x4 jeeps

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 12 days

Start Location: Marrakech, Morocco

End Location: Marrakech, Morocco

Meals: Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 7

Highlights:

Marrakech medina, Djemaa El Fna square, N'Kob berber oasis, Todra Gorge, Sahara Desert Berber Camp, Ait Benhaddou UNESCO site, Essaouira



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Marrakech. Transfer to hotel

Welcome to Morocco! After a short transfer from the airport, you will have a free day to explore this vibrant city. Tonight you will meet your fellow travellers at your pre-departure meeting at 6pm, organised at the joining hotel in the heart of town.

OVERNIGHT: Marrakech hotel

MEALS: Dinner

EXTRAS: Single room supplement (FMOR12) Child discount - 5 to 16 years (DIMOSU)

Day 2: Travel to Ait Benhaddou via Roses Valley and Atlas Mountains

Leaving Marrakech, we set off through the Road of the Roses Valley, famous within the country for its roses. A stop can be made here to see some of the wide variety of rose products. We'll then drive over the stunning High Atlas mountains, a route which African traders once used on their journeys up to Europe. After descending back down to the more desert like region around Ouarzazate we'll take a step back into history with a guided tour of the village of Ait Benhaddou. One of the oldest villages in the south of Morocco, Ait Benhaddou is a 'fortified city' with an important location on the old trading route between the desert and the mountains. Its claim to fame is some beautiful examples of Kasbahs, some of which remain inhabited. Granted UNESCO World Heritage listing, the site has been used in numerous famous movies including Lawrence of Arabia and Gladiator, and TV series including Game of Thrones. We'll explore the narrow streets of the old Kasbahs while winding up to a great view, hopefully catching sunset across the desert mountains from the top.

OVERNIGHT: Ait Benhaddou hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 3: N'Kob Fortified Villages

We'll drive through some more beautiful scenery today, passing through valleys and gorges where the Berbers built many kasbahs. The natural beauty of the area and the sight of so many of these kasbahs make this a stunning part of the country to travel through. Our destination today is one of Morocco's best kept secrets, the Berber Oasis of N'Kob. Nestling at the foot of the Jebel Saghro mountains N'Kob is host to exotic Palmeries and 45 mudbrick ksouars (fortified villages). Here we'll learn about the Ait Atta Nomads and their traditional way of life. We'll have time to enjoy the views during a walk through the Palmerie or to relax in the hotel for the afternoon. There's also the option for a fun cooking class today to prepare and cook your own Moroccan lunch.

OVERNIGHT: N'Kob hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Cross the Draa Valley to the Sahara. Camel Ride and Desert Camp

Today's drive takes us through the Anti Atlas ranges to cross the Draa Valley, one of the most famous places in Morocco for dates. We'll stop so everyone can taste some fresh ones. Excitement builds as we head to the Erg Chebbi sand dunes, which signify the commencement of the mighty Sahara Desert. We'll break for lunch, and may even have time for a relaxing swim in the summer months. The adventure really begins as we transfer to our transport into the desert – camels! Travelling on a traditional camel caravan, we trek into the desert to our authentic Berber camp. The sand dunes await as well as local food and a night of entertainment under the Saharan stars.

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, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Journey into the Todra Gorge

Our journey continues to the breath-taking Todra Gorge, with its towering high gorge walls which reach up over 300m, giving it the title of Morocco's Grand Canyon! Today you'll appreciate the charm of Todra as you witness it's ever changing colours, as the sun slowly moves from east to west. The afternoon is free to relax by the hotel pool and soak up the atmosphere or take a stroll through the Gorge and Palmerie. For those over 16 there may be time to try your hand at rock climbing – hang on!

OVERNIGHT: Todra Gorge hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Action!! Visit the movie studios of Ouarzazate

After more time to explore the Gorge this morning we take lunch at a very traditional local Berber cooperative for Berber carpets. We'll learn how the Berbers have made their carpets for centuries, and you can try your bargaining skills if you're interested in buying one. We'll then continue to Ouarzazate (the Hollywood of North Africa), another important stop on the African trading route to Europe. An optional tour is available this afternoon to visit the famous film studios here which have been used for numerous international movies and TV series over the years, including The Kingdom of Heaven, The Last Temptation of Christ, The Living Daylights and Alexander the Great.

OVERNIGHT: Ouarzazate hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Return to Marrakech and explore Djemaa el Fna Square

We drive back to Marrakech today an another incredible journey across the Atlas mountains. Arriving late afternoon in Marrakech, you will have chance to freshen up, before heading into the vibrant Djemâa-el-Fna square for dinner.

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

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Marrakech free day (optional city tour)

This morning you can enjoy an optional city tour, followed by some free time to explore for yourself. Marrakech conjures up images of an exotic, distant city, of magic carpets, snake charmers and frankincense and myrrh brought in by camel trains. You will still find examples of most of these with the rose-coloured walls of the medina. Spend time getting lost in a tangle of winding streets that open onto verdant gardens and dark alleyways that lead to bustling souks. The focal point of the city is the central square, the Djemâa-el-Fna, an extraordinary gathering and market place. Full of colour, spicy aromas and traders, it is overflowing with life. Enjoy sundowners at one of the roof top cafes as you watch the transition from day to night. Towering over the square is the Koutoubia mosque, the tallest building in the city, and a reminder of the importance of Islam to the lives of the city's residents. Once you have finished exploring why not relax by the pool, or try a traditional hammam, (a steam bath followed by an exfoliating massage) - it's the ideal end to the day.

OVERNIGHT: Marrakech hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Travel to the coastal town of Essaouira

Today we head to Essaouira on the Atlantic Coast. We pass some stunning scenery before arriving at a colourful fishing town situated within 15th century Portuguese fortifications. With fantastic beaches and great surf you will have enough free time to go surfing, wind surfing or kayaking or just relax on the beach or alternatively explore the UNESCO-listed medina with its various souks and woodcarving workshops. The beach is in front of the Medina and there are cafés with terraces where you can relax while drinking mint tea and watch Moroccan life go by. There is also optional horse trekking, quad biking available.

OVERNIGHT: Essaouira hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Essaouira Free day

Enjoy a free day on the beach and more optional activities.

OVERNIGHT: Essaouira hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 11: Return to Marrakech for one final night

We head back to Marrakech today on the Supratours public bus, before heading to the famous Djemma el Fna square for an optional group meal in the evening.

OVERNIGHT: Marrakech hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 12: Tour ends in Marrakech

Your adventure tour ends after breakfast. For those flying out of Marrakech on this day, you can arrange airport transfers with your guide, and these can be booked any time for this day – there is luggage storage at the hotel should you need to check out before your go to the airport. Additional nights in Marrakech can also be booked upon request, please contact us for details.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Included:

- 10 nights accommodation in 3 to 4-star hotels
- 1 nights in a traditional berber desert camp
- Transport in AC minibus/coach or 4x4
- 24-hour airport arrival transfer service
- English speaking tour leader throughout and specialist local guides
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (11 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 7 dinners)
- Entrances fees to monuments as stated

Excluded:

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Departure airport transfer service
- · Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tipping kitty 2025 USD 70, 2026 USD 75
- Tips for guides and drivers (not included in the tipping kitty)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Hotel Gala Dinners

Many of Morocco's higher level 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 normally compulsory on New Year's Eve (31 Dec), whether you attend or not. Prices for any compulsory Gala Dinners are 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 (FMOR12)

Min numbers: 1

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.

Child discount - 5 to 16 years (DIMOSU)

Min numbers: 1

This option can be selected for all children aged 5 to 16 years at the date of travel who will share a room with one or two adults.

We recommend that you contact us for a specific quote for your whole family based on the number and ages of your children, and the number of rooms you'll need.

Locally Available Options

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.

- Guided city tour of Marrakech 3 hours (2-4 Pax 200 DH, 5-9 Pax 150 DH, 10 Pax 100 DH)
- Bahia Palace Entry Fee (100 DH)
- Hammam in Marrakech (prices from 150 DH)
- Hot air balloon ride over the High Atlas Mountains (2000 DH)
- Movie Studio visit in Ouarzazate (30 minutes = 80 DH)
- Cooking classes in Todra (300 DH)
- Quad biking in Ouarzazate AGE 16+ ONLY (2 hours = 590DH, 2 hours for 2 pax = 690DH)
- Rock climbing in Todra Gorge Adult must be present (1 hour = 300 DH)

The below options are only available on tours visiting Essaouira:

- Quad biking in Essaouira AGE 16+ ONLY (2 hours = 590DH, 2 hours for 2 pax = 690DH)
- Horse riding in Essaouira (1 hour = 250 DH, 2/3 hours = approx. 300 DH/390 DH approx.

- Windsurfing in Essaouira (2 hours = approx. 600 DH)
- Surfing in Essaouira (2 hours = approx. 350 DH)
- Kayaking in Essaouira (2 hours = approx. 350 DH)
- Kite surfing in Essaouira (2 hours = approx. 700DH

1. Accommodation

We use good quality mid-range tourist class hotels on this tour, rated at the local Moroccan 3 to 4-star level (local star ratings may vary slightly from international standards). Where possible, an effort has been made to use locally owned, family friendly accommodations for this tour.

Accommodation is based on double, twin en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will have a private double room and generally an extra bed will be added for children.

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

The overnight Berber camp in the desert is spent in simple but comfortable goat hair tents on the edge of the dunes with beds and bedding provided. You may want to bring a sleeping bag or sleeping sheet for extra comfort during the colder winter months (November-February).

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. For your trip into the desert dunes, local 4x4 vehicles are used.

3. Group Makeup / Tour Leader / Guides

We are committed to maintaining small groups wherever possible as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. This tour therefore has a maximum size of 16 people. The minimum number of travellers required for the tour to run is 2.

This is one of our Family tours, and we therefore set the minimum age for travellers to join the tour at 5. There is no maximum age limit, but travellers need to be moderately fit and mobile and in general we would recommend this tour for those travelling with children aged from 5 to 16 years (minimum age 5).

An English speaking guide will accompany the group throughout the tour, along with the driver. We may also use specialist local guides to give extra information at some of the sites visited during the tour. At Encounters Travel we aim to 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.

We may share this tour with travellers booking through other operators.

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