

Morocco in Depth

With Essaouira



TRAVEL WITH ME EXCLUSIVE

Embarking on a journey to Morocco is like stepping into a vibrant tapestry of colours, flavours, and traditions. From the bustling medinas of Marrakech, where the scent of exotic spices fills the air, to the majestic Sahara Desert, where endless golden dunes meet the sky.

Price from \$5798 pp Twin and from \$7098 Solo

17 Days/16 Nights

28 Sept to 14 Oct 2024

Inclusions

- Fully escorted by Travel with Me, Tina Flower, ex Perth (sub. to min numbers)
- Expert local, English speaking guides
- Max 16 Guests
- All meals and touring included, as per Itinerary
- Overnight Stay in Desert Camp
- Local Experiences as per itinerary
- 2 day Essaouira Extension
- Deposit \$600 pp / Finals due 10 July 24

Price and Itinerary are subject to change at any time



TRAVEL WITH ME

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ITINERARY

Day 1: 28 Sept. - Casablanca

Meet your escort, Tina, at Perth International airport for your flight to Morocco.

On arrival at Casablanca Airport, you will be transferred to your hotel. Your adventure begins at 6 pm with an important welcome meeting. If you arrive with time to spare, a great option for your limited time in Casablanca is to visit the Villa des Arts. This gorgeous Art Deco gallery holds numerous exhibitions of contemporary Moroccan and international art. If you are looking for a different type of cultural experience, then you can discover a unique and fascinating part of Moroccan history at the Museum of Judaism. This evening, celebrate the beginning of a new adventure with a wonderful dinner with your group, set in a traditional restaurant. Nowhere is Morocco's cultural heritage more evident than in its food, and tonight you'll have the chance to try classic dishes like tagine, couscous and pastilla.

 *Hotel Idou Anfa or similar (D)*

Day 2: 29 Sept. - Rabat

This morning you will visit one of the most impressive sites in Casablanca - the massive edifice of the Mosque of Hassan II. Second only in size to the great mosque at Mecca, the huge building sits partly on land and partly over sea, and is one of the only religious sites open to non-Muslims. Later, leave Casablanca and drive north along the coast to Rabat, the elegant capital of Morocco and its first Imperial city. Start your visit with a walk through the medina and souks, then explore the lovely walled quarter known as the Kasbah des Oudaïas, where you'll enjoy an included mint tea in a little treasure of a café overlooking the ocean and Bou Regreg river. Afterwards, continue the walk to visit the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, the vast minaret of the Mosque of Hassan II

 *Hotel le Musee or similar (B)*

Day 3: 30 Sept. - Chefchaouen

Join your leader and explore the charming streets of Meknes's medina – the old walled section of the city. There's something particularly special about exploring this lesser-known medina as the locals go about their daily lives.

Walk to the shrine of Moulay Ismail, visit the granaries and stop by a local market selling vegetables, olives and sweets. Drive on to the ruins of Volubilis. Once a provincial Roman capital, a distant outpost of the empire, the remains make an undeniably impressive sight. Here a local guide will show you around, provide expert knowledge, and help you imagine the bustling city that once was. Enjoy a picnic lunch of fresh bread, cheese and seasonal fruits and olives from the market. Continue to Chefchaouen. Nestled high in the Rif Mountains, Chefchaouen is famous for its buildings washed in bright shades of blue – this is undeniably one of the world's prettiest cities.

 *Vancii Chefchaouen or similar (B/L)*



Day 4: 1 Oct - Chefchaouen

This morning, you'll discover Chefchaouen beneath the blue during a tour of the medina with a local guide. Tour its winding alleyways, cobbled plazas and unique doorways and find out what makes the city so alluring. Stop off for a tasting of goat's cheese – you'll see there's no shortage of goats in Chefchaouen and this soft, creamy goat's cheese is some of Morocco's best. Enjoy a free afternoon for further explorations. You may like to take the opportunity to snap some more pictures of the city's blue-hued buildings, shop for handicrafts, or simply sit at a cafe and enjoy the pleasure of time passing by. A special homecooked dinner tonight.

 *Vancii Chefchaouen or similar (B/D)*



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Day 5: 2 Oct - Fes

Say goodbye to Chefchaouen and make the journey to Fes. Fes is the spiritual and cultural heart of Morocco; a vibrant, noisy and fascinating feast for the senses. On arrival, perhaps take some time to unwind in a local hammam— speak to your leader for some great recommendations. This evening you'll have the unique opportunity to see a different side of Moroccan life as you are warmly welcomed into the home of a local family for a pastilla dinner. One of the country's most celebrated dishes, this sweet and savory delight is made with layered pastry and meat, cooked with eggs, caramelized onions, lemon and sugared almonds. Learn how the iconic Moroccan pie is made as you chat with your friendly hosts about life in Fes, then end the night with a traditional sweet treat.

 *Riad Al Makan or similar (B/D)*

Day 6: 3 Oct - Fes

Today head into the Old Town, known locally as Fes el Bali. Medieval Fes was one of the world's great centres of education and culture, both Islamic and Jewish. Its religious institutions and libraries are legendary, its mosques of great renown. Your leader will share stories of the city's history as you walk through the twisting streets and alleyways, passing donkeys piled high with goods, and explore the specialty sections that divide the souk. Filled with historic khans, medresses and dye-pits, stalls loaded with fruits, herbs and soups, and where the squawk of chickens, smell of spice and sound of hammering of copper fills the air. Spend the day exploring the old city, visiting Al-Attarine Madrasa, the tanneries and the splendid Funduk Nejjarine, a beautifully restored 18th-century inn.

 *Riad Al Makan or similar (B/D)*

Day 7: 4 Oct - Erfoud

Today, leave the intensity of the city behind for the desert oasis town of Erfoud. Prepare for a long driving day and have your camera ready as there will be plenty of stops to appreciate the ever-changing Moroccan landscape along the way. Wind past olive groves, shepherds tending to their flocks, forests of cedar, pine and oak, and valleys filled with date palms – all with views of the High Atlas Mountains in the distance. Arrive in Erfoud, your gateway to the Sahara Desert. Built by the French in the early 1900s, the town features tightly packed red sand buildings that blend seamlessly into the desert surroundings. While here, be sure to try some dates fresh from the local market – the dates in Erfoud are so delicious they celebrate them with a festival every year.

 *Hotel Chergui or similar (B/D)*

Day 8: 5 Oct- Merzouga

Spend the morning exploring Khemliya, a village on the fringe of the orange-coloured Erg Chebbi sand dunes. This traditional Saharan village is known for a distinctive style of music and dance. For lunch today you will get to see how the local speciality dish of medfouna is made, and then sample some yourself. Then it's time to do as the locals do and ride a camel through the desert towards your Feature Stay accommodation – a spectacular camp hidden away in the sand dunes of the Sahara. Here in this magical escape from the modern world you'll experience the true essence of desert life. But the remote location doesn't mean skimping on amenities – permanent tents feature large beds, en suite bathrooms and delightful, authentic décor. Tonight, embrace your extraordinary surroundings and enjoy a traditional feast beneath a sky jewelled with thousands of stars, followed by live Gnaoua music around an open fire.

 *Madu Luxury Desert Camp (Feature Stay) or similar (B/L/D)*



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Day 9: 6 Oct- Dades

Start the day with a truly unforgettable experience – a camel ride across the desert during sunrise, watching the landscape turn remarkable shades of orange. After breakfast, drive to Todra Gorge, a massive trench that rises over 250 metres to form one of the most dramatic and spectacular natural sights in Morocco. The limestone stacks make a perfect area for hiking, and so to make the most of the stunning surroundings you will take a short and gentle walk through the gorge. Then continue to the beautiful Dades Valley, your base for the next two nights. This area offers up scenery like no other – sprawling green valleys give way to otherworldly rock formations carved out by the wind. Your accommodation offers a delightful pool and terrace, so take some time to sit back and soak in the ethereal views.

 *Hotel New Mars Dades or similar (B/L/D)*

Day 10: 7 Oct - Dades

You have a full day to explore the beauty of this largely untouched Moroccan backcountry and the best way to do so is on foot. There are a couple of circuits in the area – there is the option to tackle a 10-kilometre circuit that will take about 4 hours, but your leader can tailor the route based on the preferences of the group. Take a short transfer to the start of the trek, then set out with a local guide. The trail undulates and can be challenging in sections but is accessible to everyone with a basic level of fitness. Stop in a village en route and enjoy tea with a local Amazigh (Berber) family. This experience offers a unique glimpse into the Amazigh way of life that few visitors to Morocco have the chance to see. Set against the sensational backdrop of the surrounding mountains and famous Rose Valley, take the opportunity to share stories and learn about family life in the Dades Valley.

 *Hotel New Mars Dades or similar (B/D)*

Day 11: 8 Oct - Ait Benhaddou

Depart the Dades Valley and set off on the Road of a Thousand Kasbahs. Your first stop is Skoura Oasis, home to several privately owned kasbahs, including the Kasbah Ameridhl, with its extravagant decorations and mud-brick fortifications. Continue to Ait Benhaddou – a hilltop site almost unchanged since the 11th century. Its grand kasbah is one of the most beautiful in Morocco and the fortified village is a fine example of clay architecture. You may recognise the site from its long list of film and TV credits, including Lawrence of Arabia, Game of Thrones and Gladiator. Walk through the winding streets of the Old Town, making your way to the top of the hill for some scenic views. Afterwards, visit Tawesna – a local teahouse on the river – for a tasty lunch including freshly made Amazigh bread, soup, Moroccan sweets, and of course some mint tea. This community-run establishment provides women with a small income to support themselves and their children. The women use natural ingredients sourced from local cooperatives to prepare tea and pastries, taking great pride in sharing their stories and giving visitors an authentic Amazigh experience.

 *Dar Mouna or similar (B/L/D)*



Day 12: 9 Oct - Ouirgane

Leave Ait Benhaddou after breakfast and drive for several hours through the winding roads of the Atlas Mountains. You can take your time as the scenery is magnificent and keen photographers may call for a few photo stops. Our destination today is Ouirgane. Nestled in the tranquil foothills of the High Atlas Mountains, this pretty village provides visitors with an alternative and lesser-visited base for walking. With its gentle winter climate and moderate summer, it is a great place to stroll around the nearby red-earth hills and pine forests, watch a wide variety of bird life or just sit back and relax at an invigorating altitude of 1000 metres – all with the amazing view of Jebel Toubkal in the background. Speak to your leader about some wonderful hiking options this afternoon.

 *Ksar Shama or similar (B/D)*



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Day 13: 10 Oct - Ourgane to Essaouira

Travel to the nearby town of Tahanaout where you will enjoy a hands-on cooking class with a celebrated local chef. You will explore his organic kitchen garden surrounded by beautiful olive groves and orchards set in a traditional Berber douar. Harvest ingredients fresh from the garden and let the chef teach you the art of seasoning with aromatic Moroccan herbs. Learn to cook tagines and salads, and then savour your creations over a delicious lunch. After a splendid feast, continue to the captivating coastal beauty of Essaouira often referred to as the "Wind City of Africa," is a picturesque coastal town located on the western coast of Morocco.

With its rich history, unique architecture, and vibrant atmosphere, Essaouira is a popular destination that offers a blend of cultural, historical, and natural attractions. Tonight, you're free to indulge in a fresh seafood dinner or stroll by the beach in the evening light.

 *Hotel Atlas Essaouira or similar (B/L/D)*

Day 14: 11 Oct - Essaouira

Embark on a guided tour of Essaouira, where an expert local guide will lead you through the town's charming streets, historical sites, and cultural landmarks. Delve into the rich history and architecture of the medina, explore the bustling port with its iconic blue fishing boats, and discover the vibrant arts scene that has made Essaouira a haven for artists and musicians.

As the guided tour concludes, you'll have the opportunity to enjoy a leisurely and free afternoon. Whether you choose to relax on the pristine beaches, explore the local markets and artisan shops, or indulge in a fresh seafood meal by the sea, the afternoon is yours to Savor at your own pace. Embrace the unique blend of relaxation and exploration that Essaouira offers during this tranquil and enriching free time

 *Hotel Atlas Essaouira or similar (B)*

Day 15: 12 Oct - Marrakech

Following a delightful breakfast, bid adieu to the enchanting town of Essaouira and commence your journey toward the vibrant city of Marrakech. As you travel, you'll transition from the coastal serenity of Essaouira to the bustling energy of Marrakech, ready to embrace new adventures and experiences in this captivating Moroccan destination.

In the afternoon, curb that craving you're having for Marrakech food on a tasting tour with a local guide. Once you step your feet into the backstreet of the medina, a chaotic food scents will cue you in on your degustation voyage, just follow your foodie insider though! Get to taste a variety of local flavourful bites as you wander off in out of sight shops sampling olives, snack on nuts, local treats, spices, traditional breads. End the day with a local dinner in the square of Jemaa el-Fna with your fellow travellers.

 *Bab Hotel or similar (B/D)*

Day 16: 13 Oct - Marrakech

After breakfast today, meet with a local guide who will bring the magic of Marrakech to life as you set off on a morning tour of the old medina, through the bustling souks that are the lifeblood of the city. Explore tranquil courtyards filled with the scent of orange blossom and the many salons and chambers that make up Bahia Palace.

Stop by the Koutoubia Mosque; the inside is for Muslims only, but the famous minaret is a sight to behold. Walk back through the streets of the old medina to Djemaa el-Fna, stopping off to taste some of the marvellous freshly squeezed orange juice from a local stall – this is sure to be one of the most delicious glasses of orange juice you ever have. The rest of the day is free to explore further. Perhaps visit Le Jardin Secret, a traditional medina garden with a magnificent courtyard, or head back into the medina and practice your haggling skills. For your final evening, join your group for a farewell dinner.

 *Bab Hotel or similar (B/D)*



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Day 17: 14 October - Marrakech

Your trip ends today, after breakfast. Check-out time is usually around 12.00 noon and you are free to leave at any time. If you have arranged a private airport transfer you will be advised of the pick-up time. Additional accommodation can be pre-booked if you wish to spend more time exploring Marrakech.

Transfer to the airport



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