

# Morocco EXPLORED tours

## Sample Itinerary Casablanca to Casablanca

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Hello,  
 thank you for your interest in our tours. This is Salah Chabaoui from Morocco Explored here to help with your visit to Morocco. When you know your flights I can pin down your tour. All are custom made and can start any day. We can add or reduce the number of days to match your budget or flights. Please don't hesitate if you have any questions.

I have a sample itinerary below. From Casablanca transport to charming Chefchaouen, the blue city. Fez awaits next, where you'll stay in the heart of her storybook medina. Roman ruins, Barbary apes, a Swiss alpine village, and the Atlas mountain gateway to the desert takes you to another world all together. From here date palm oasis, gorges, and huge pink sand dunes have you immersed into the Sahara on camel trek. Entering deep into the land of kasbahs, Berber culture, desert tribes and nomads, sets the stage for your journey to the world heritage site of Ait Benhaddou. Historic sites and night market in Marrakech bring you back to the city. Chill out in the coastal town of Essaouira, once the haunt of pirates, before your return to Casablanca. You can decompress at the seaside village of Oualidia before catching your flight home.

On travel days you'll be out of the vehicle walking the sites. Many places do not allow vehicles to enter. There's a lot to see! You'll be on guided walking tours in Fez and Marrakech medinas with no vehicle travel on these days. You will have free time to explore on your own.

While on the road you may stop to visit regional markets; drive off road, walk in the Todra gorge and much more. You can discuss with your driver what's possible each day. We explain a lot more about how this all works in our TRAVEL GUIDE sent with each booking.

We use small hotels and riads that are of interest because of location, good food, and unique traditional architecture.

## CASABLANCA TO CASABLANCA 14 DAYS

Options to upgrade to 4\* hotels and luxury desert camp.

### HOW TO BOOK THIS TOUR

#### What's Included

- all taxes,
- private transport and fuel,
- experienced Moroccan driver,
- door to door service,
- breakfasts (vegetarians welcome),
- en suite 3\*/4\* unique hotels with heating and air conditioning,
- English speaking walking tours in Marrakech and Fez,
- overnight camp in the sand dunes,
- mattresses, blankets, sheets and pillows are provided in desert camp,
- camp also has solar lighting and toilets, kitchen and dining tent,
- camel guides and friendly camels... and lots of sand.

#### What's Not included

- free to have lunch where and when you like,
- dinners
- personal purchases,
- tips,
- camel guides and drivers are paid, but also welcome tips.

## 14 DAYS ITINERARY

### Day 1 Chefchaouen

Arrive Casablanca airport and transfer to Chefchaouen. Along the way lies Rabat, the capital and fourth largest city of Morocco located on the Atlantic ocean. On the facing shore lies Salé, the ancient home of the notorious 17th century pirates who roamed the Atlantic seas between colonial America and Europe, seizing ships for goods and captives. You will arrive this evening in Chefchaouen. Hotel includes breakfast.

### Day 2 Chefchaouen

Explore the hillside town of Chefchaouen. Surrounded by the Rif mountains, Chefchaouen is small enough to wander freely on foot and explore the narrow streets that wind throughout this blue and white medina. Known as the blue city, Chefchaouen or Chaouen for short is famous for the electric blue that covers it's houses and mosques. The custom dates back to the 15th century when Jewish refugees settled and brought their tradition of painting things blue to mirror the sky and remind them of god. The photographic opportunities are endless, especially fascinating in the mid day sunlight. Stay in medina hotel includes breakfast as above.

### Day 3 Fez

This morning drive to Fez. Along the way you will stop and visit Meknes old city, the 17th-century imperial city-within-a-city of Moulay Ismael, palaces, mosques, and gardens. The

highlights are the dungeons; the royal stables containing grain silos that used to hold enough food for the city residents for a year, as well as a stable big enough for 12,000 horses. Continue onward to the ruins of Volubilis. The Romans built this city as a trading doorway into Africa and for 200 years in the 2nd and 3rd century, it was the furthest outpost of all Roman cities. It's beautiful mosaics and columns can still be seen. The surrounding land is prized for its olive trees. Nearby is where Moulay Idriss I brought the religion of Islam in the year 789, and started a new dynasty. In addition to founding the town, he initiated the construction of Fez. Stay medina 4\*riad includes breakfast.

#### **Day 4 Fez**

After breakfast meet your guide\* and explore this fascinating medina. The endless labyrinth of narrow streets is like no other, with hundreds of tiny shops, a dyers souk and craft manufacturers who ply their trade in narrow medieval grottoes. Visit the famous leather tanneries still using techniques from ancient times to produce fine leather in beautiful colours. Fez is also famous for its robust and beautiful pottery, brass and copper trays and tea services, regional cuisine and ancient medersa (schools of Islam). Stay medina riad. Includes breakfast.

\*Includes a private walking tour of Fez.

#### **Day 5 Midelt**

Morning free in Fez. Depart Fez for Azrou where there are opportunities to see Barbary apes in the cedar forests. Midelt on the edge of the Sahara is another world in contrast. This bustling desert town has an interesting shop that sells carpets made with striking abstract designs by the women of the region, and a regional market on Sundays. Stay in Midelt hotel, includes dinner and breakfast.

#### **Day 6 Desert camp**

Leaving Midelt continue into the Sahara until the Erg Chebbi dunes appear on the horizon. The Ziz valley is a date palm oasis that stretches all the way to Erfoud, containing hundreds of kasbahs and ksar (a group of kasbahs). In Erfoud you'll have time to stop to visit the (Saturday) date market, and resupply for anything you need at the local super market. Your destination is the desert camp beyond the town of Merzouga, far from the many hotels lining the dunes. Have tea or a drink by the pool in the desert inn before meeting your camel guides to ride to the camp. Dinner is served (vegetarians welcome) under the evening stars. Climb the massive dunes and watch the moon rise before retiring to your bed in your tent. Today includes breakfast and dinner.

#### **Day 7 Todra Gorge / Tinehir**

This morning you'll wake very early to have tea and get ready to ride the camels by a different route back to the auberge. Stop to watch the sunrise before returning for breakfast and a shower. Leaving the dunes, you'll travel through the remote volcanic Saghro Massif towards Tinehir. Along the way you can visit fossil workshops for a closer look at Sahara's variety of ancient life. Stop to hunt for fossils in the rocks, explore any local markets at your leisure, and visit a small museum about Berber life in an ancient mud village. Rissani has a lively thrice weekly souk selling many goods, animals and spices brought in from the surrounding villages. Arrive in Tinehir and settle into your room in an historic kasbah. Includes dinner and breakfast.

#### **Day 8 Ait Benhaddou**

Take a walk through Todra Gorge, where sheer limestone walls rise to 300 m in its narrowest part. After lunch you can wander with a local Berber guide through palmeries,

villages, gardens, and kasbahs for a close look at traditional Berber ways of life. Onward to the Dades valley, stop at the Monkey fingers rock formations. Your next destination (2 hours) is Ait Benhaddou. Along the way you'll drive off road, (weather permitting) across the mountains to the remote village of Boutaghrach to visit nomads in the area, then pass through many Berber villages and green riverside oasis and barren hills clustered with kasbahs. Villages sprinkle the Skoura oasis and the Valley of the Rose, famous for producing elegant Persian rose oil. From Ouarzazate continue to Ait Benhaddou World Heritage site kasbahs. Spend the night in an auberge with views of Ait Benhaddou. Includes dinner and breakfast.

### **Day 9 Marrakech**

This morning you can take time to explore the World Heritage Site of Ait Benhaddou before the crowds from Marrakech arrive. The village of clustered Berber Kasbahs has been used as a backdrop for countless adventure films. In its prime it was one of the most powerful fortress strongholds on the Salt Road for the camel caravans that were plagued by thieves and raiders in the High Atlas. You'll follow the old Salt Road camel caravan route to Telouet to explore the old Glaoui kasbah. This once beautiful palace now stands crumbling to ruins because no one wants to remember "the vulture" sultan and his son "Thami" who lived here until the 1950's. After lunch descend the High Atlas mountains Tichka pass (2260m) to the lowlands of Marrakech, with time to stop and enjoy impressive landscapes over coffee and fresh-squeezed orange juice. Stay medina riad includes breakfast.

### **Day 10 Marrakech**

Explore the back street maze of Marrakech with your guide,\* visit Ben Youssef Medersa, the Koutoubia mosque, and the Marrakech Museum or the Saadian tombs. Your guide will discuss what you want to see and do. Afternoon free to explore the vast souk (market). The Souk is comprised of many specialist areas e.g. metalwork, where crafters ply their trade; dyers workshops are strung with colourful skeins of wool; carpets, and carpet sellers entice you into their shops with a cup of mint tea; search tiny shops selling Berber jewelry, old silver, and African beads; or spices, olives, fresh herbs; or traditional apothecaries where you can buy all manner of potions to heal or cast spells of love or revenge. Stay Marrakech as above.

\*Private walking tour is included.

### **Day 11 Marrakech**

Free day to explore further around the souk and medina streets, taxi out to the Jardin Majorelle (Yves St. Laurent) where the French artist Jacques Majorelle built his Bou Saf Saf Villa and collected plants to create one of the worlds most intimate gardens. Afterwards you can venture to the nearby French quarter (Gueliz #1 bus from the square) for great shopping and good restaurants. Try a hammam, henna, or cooking class, or just wander and enjoy this vibrant North African city. We recommend bringing a good guide book with great maps and cultural details to help you find your way. Stay medina riad includes breakfast.

### **Day 12 Essaouira**

Transfer to Essaouira. Set on the Atlantic region that was once the pirate haunt called Mogador, it's now famous for its fresh seafood, thuja wood crafts and artists colony. The coast is peppered with Argan trees (yes - there are goats in the trees) and the expansive beach is great for long walks. Visit a traditional pharmacy and learn about natural medicines and cures, and a womens cooperative where Argan nuts are processed by

hand into one of the rarest oils in the world. Old Portuguese ramparts overlook the sea, guarding the walled city where you can watch silver craftsmen and wood carvers at work in the most charming medina in Morocco. Stay riad in the medina. Includes breakfast.

### **Day 13      Essaouira**

Stay and explore around the old medina shops and markets filled with spices, African trading goods, wooden carvings and masks, colourful textiles and carpets, and pottery, and artists galleries. Essaouira is also an active fishing port where fresh fish is bought and sold right on the docks. There is also unique birdwatching and the rare Eleonoras falcon nests on the island opposite the port (off limits to visits). Swim, kite sail, ride horses or camels or just relax on the golden sands, or shop for that perfect carpet. Fresh seafood cooked right in the simple beachside caFez. Stay riad as above.

### **Day 14      Casablanca**

Follow the Atlantic coastal highway north to Oualidia where you can stop for lunch. Transfer to the airport at Casablanca, say good bye to your driver, and depart for home. Or stay the night at the airport hotel and depart an early flight next day.

## **A FINAL WORD ABOUT OUR TOURS**

Please know that Morocco is still developing; things change, roads are winding and rough, activities and things stop running or change, and weather can send the best laid plans out the door. We will do our best to provide what is planned and offer alternatives but please take into consideration the nature of the journey that you are embarking on and understand that a certain degree of flexibility is necessary. If you have a problem please inform us immediately and we will do our best to make the necessary changes to keep you happy on tour.