



Morocco: Casablanca, Fes, Erfoud, Ouarzazate, High Atlas Mountains, Essaouira, Marrakech

Duration: 13 nights, 14 days

Pricing: Starting at \$5,250 per person based on two travelers.

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## Trip Summary:

Excitement runs high on our two week journey through Morocco as you make your way through near-everything Morocco has to offer: modern Casablanca, medieval Fes, striking desert scenery, dramatic gorges, cosmopolitan Marrakech, tranquil and scenic Essaouira and the High Atlas Mountains; Morocco is indeed an impressively diverse country. And in the typical *Heritage Tours Private Travel* fashion, we make sure you travel with expert guides, stay in excellent hotels and receive special insider's access to the places you visit. This is a Moroccan adventure you won't soon forget.



## itinerary

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## Itinerary:

### Day 1:

Upon arrival in Casablanca you will be escorted to your hotel in the city center. We suggest a brief stop along the Corniche for a glass of fresh squeezed orange juice overlooking the Atlantic. Upon arrival you will check into the Royal Mansour, Casablanca's finest hotel. After some time to freshen up, you will receive a private half-day tour. Highlights include: the Mosque Hassan II, dramatically sited at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, this astounding edifice is larger than Saint Peter's in Rome and capable of holding 80,000 worshippers; the monumental colonial architecture of Place Mohamed V; the French-built Quartier Habous; the Gates of the Royal Palace and more.

Overnight: Casablanca

### Day 2:

Today you will be escorted eastward to Fes. En route visit the extensive Roman ruins at Volubulis and tour the capital of the ancient Roman province of Mauritania. After completing a tour of the ruins, there will be time for a brief stop at nearby Moulay Idriss, the holiest Muslim site in Morocco and subsequently a visit to imperial Meknes whose spectacular city gates are among the finest in the Arab world. Upon arrival in Fes you will check in at Riad Myra, one of Fes' premier riads with just twelve rooms and suites. In this riad there is a lovely hammam and rooftop terrace. The riad also has an excellent chef.

Overnight: Fes

**Morocco**  
**Spain**  
**Portugal**  
**Turkey**  
**Southern Africa**

#### Day 3:

Step back six centuries into the medieval world of Fes, whose cobbled streets are filled with ancient mosques, towering green-glazed minarets and crumbling fondouks (hostels for travelers and their animals). Narrow doorways peer into private worlds, revealing peaceful courtyards filled with carved cedar, brilliantly colored mosaic tiles and delicately carved stucco ornament. Highlights of today's touring includes the Bou Inania Medersa (koranic university), the Foundouk Nejjarine (which has an excellent museum), the shrine of Moulay Idriss II, countless souks and Fes' famous tanneries.

Overnight: Fes

#### Day 4:

Today you will continue touring Fes. Highlights include: the Dar Batha Museum, which has a particularly impressive pottery collection dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the stunning gates of the Royal Palace; and (if you're interested) the adjacent Jewish Quarter and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Ibn Danan Synagogue. In the afternoon (pending availability), we will make arrangements for you to visit a privately owned palace, now in great decay, which belongs to one of the most famous historical names in Morocco. With a bit of imagination, you can envision the sweeping grandeur of this crumbling palace's glorious past.

Overnight: Fes

#### Day 5:

Today begin your drive to Morocco's desert. We suggest an early start. Drive south through the scenic cedar forests of the Middle Atlas Mountains, following the green Ziz River valley until it ends at the Sahara desert. As the last paved road ends at the edge of the oasis town of Erfoud, you leave the world behind, continuing by 4x4 to a small oasis in the desert. Here is the Auberge Kasbah Derkaoua - a unique, rather homey inn filled with ambiance and lots of personality. The Auberge's swimming pool is a treat in the desert!

Overnight: Erfoud

#### Day 6:

Very Early Wake up. A 4x4 will be waiting for you. The adventure continues towards the legendary dunes of Erg Chebbi. Considered by desert aficionados to be perhaps the largest dunes in the Sahara, they are constantly shifting due to the considerable desert winds. You will ride up the dunes on a camel in order to witness the sun rising from the east over the desert dunes – one of Morocco's greatest sights. After the sun rises, you'll be driven back to your hotel for breakfast. After breakfast, continue your 4x4 adventure in the Sahara desert. Explore the crumbling ruins of once grand Kasbahs, now half-buried by sand. Begin to make your way to Ouarzazate. En route there will be time to visit a few strikingly scenic areas, among them the Todgha Gorges and the Dades Gorges. Upon arrival in Ouarzazate, check into Hotel Berbere Palace (5\*), the finest hotel in Ouarzazate.

Overnight: Ouarzazate

#### Day 7:

Spend the morning exploring the region around Ouarzazate.

Visit the Kasbah Taourirt and the UNESCO-restored Kasbah of Ait Ben Haddou. Film buffs may be surprised to learn that Ouarzazate was the setting for dozens of movies from *Gladiator* to *Lawrence of Arabia*. When you're ready you will be escorted to the High Atlas Mountains. Upon arriving in the village of Imlil, you'll take a ten minute walk up to Kasbah du Toubkal. Mules will be available if you prefer to ride! Sited on a hilltop with commanding views of the surrounding valley, Kasbah du Toubkal was built as a summer palace for the Pasha El Glaoui. It is now a wonderful place to experience Berber hospitality and a great base from which to explore the High Atlas or relax and enjoy the scenery.

Overnight: High Atlas Mountains

#### Day 8:

Day at leisure to enjoy the facilities and services of your hotel in the High Atlas Mountains.

Overnight: High Atlas Mountains

#### Day 9:

Today you'll leave the High Atlas Mountains and head west to the Atlantic Ocean and former Portuguese colony of Essaouira (about 2 ½ - 3 hours).

Check into Dar L'Oussia, a small hotel, housed in a historic riad within the medina. Dar L'Oussia has a lovely rooftop terrace overlooking the old city and the port of Essaouira. The remainder of the day at leisure to wander about the enchanting streets and alleys of laid-back Essaouira – the setting in 1952 for Orson Welles' *Othello*. Once known as Mogador, Essaouira's blue and white medina is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Overnight: Essaouira

#### Day 10:

Full day at leisure to explore Essaouira.

Overnight: Essaouira

#### Day 11:

Today you'll leave the Atlantic Ocean behind and continue to Marrakech (approximately 2 – 2 ½ hours).

Check into Les Jardins de la Medina. A garden oasis of calm and tranquility only a fifteen-minute walk from the Djemaa el F'naa, this boutique hotel features lovely gardens and a heated pool. After time to freshen up, enjoy a private walking tour of Marrakech, featuring: the Koutoubia Mosque, a 12<sup>th</sup>-century tiled minaret known as Marrakech's defining landmark; and the Djemaa el Fnaa, a lively square full with storytellers, healers, snake charmers, acrobats and countless food stalls. The square has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Space (one of only a handful in the world).

*Tonight we would be happy to arrange dinner reservations for you at some of the finest restaurants in Marrakech.*

Overnight: Marrakech

Day 12:

Enjoy a private tour through Marrakech. Explore the colorful souks (marketplaces), the medieval Medersa ben Youssef (koranic university) - one of the finest Islamic monuments in North Africa. Architecture aficionados will enjoy the delicate dome of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Koubba. Close to the medersa are two of the most interesting cultural showplaces in Marrakech. The Musee de Marrakech is housed in the sumptuous, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mnebhi Palace. Nearby is the Dar Bellarj cultural foundation. Established to showcase Moroccan culture, it is housed in a former hospital for storks. Conclude your day exploring the ancient medina.

Overnight: Marrakech

Day 13:

Continue your private touring in Marrakech which includes, among other stops: the tropical Majorelle Gardens, the opulent Saadien Tombs, and the ruins of the vast Badi'a Palace.

Overnight: Marrakech

Day 14:

Today you will be escorted to Casablanca where you'll board your return flight home.

What's Included:

- Accommodations
- Breakfast Daily
- Personalized, private touring as noted
- Transportation as noted
- All admissions on private touring
- Hotel Service Charges and Taxes

Not included:

- Air arrangements
- Sightseeing/admissions when not with an expert guide
- Meals other than breakfast, unless specified
- Transport unless listed above
- Gratuities
- Anything not noted as included

*Accommodations, length of stay, guiding and route can all be modified to suit your needs and interest.*