

# Morocco Marrakech & Sahara 8 days



Soak up majestic Marrakech and its medina; marvel at the stunning 300m high Todra Gorge and the magnificent Gorge du Dades; camel trek into the Sahara Desert to experience a genuine Berber camp, and visit Ait Benhaddou's famous fortified Kasbah. This hotel based tour is a great way to discover southern Morocco. We travel by mini bus and 4x4 from Marrakech over to the Sahara desert and back again staying in 3\* hotels as well as at a traditional Berber camp in the desert! En route, you'll witness the staggering scenery and catch glimpses of traditional Moroccan life as people go about their daily business.



## TOUR OVERVIEW

Tour operates:	All year
Tour type:	Group
Transport:	Minivan/4x4 Landcruiser
Tour rating:	Easy
Start - Finish:	Marrakech - Marrakech
Minimum group size:	2
Maximum group size:	16
Minimum age:	15

## HIGHLIGHTS

Marrakech - Koutoubia Mosque, UNESCO listed site; Djemâa el-Fna, souks; High Atlas mountains Gorge du Dades - "Valley of Roses"; Todra Gorge; Erg Chebbi sand dunes - beginning of the Sahara; Merzouga - camel trek, Berber style camp; Ouarzazate; Ait Benhaddou - UNESCO-listed ancient fortified Kasbah city

## Marrakech & Sahara

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#### ITINERARY

##### Day 1 - Marrakech:

Welcome to Morocco! Following your transfer from the airport to our joining hotel in the heart of Marrakech, make the most of your first day and explore the souks and Djemaa El Fna (the legendary main square). Be sure to be at the hotel for the pre-departure meeting at 18.00 where you will meet your fellow travellers.

##### Day 2 - Gorges du Dades:

Leaving Marrakech, we venture through the Gorges du Dades, a stunning valley which extends from the High Atlas to the Jebel Sahro range in the south. Berbers built many Kasbahs in the vicinity of gorges for defence purposes and these, combined with its natural beauty make this area a fitting backdrop to the start of your adventure!

##### Day 3 - Todra Gorge:

This morning brings the opportunity to explore the Gorge du Dades, walking through the foothills and the local villages and getting a feel for the area.

After lunch we head east and discover the charm of the Todra Gorge with its plunging depths to its 300m high cliffs. Witness its changing colour, from bright yellow under the mid day sun to orange and red as the sun slowly moves from east to west. Here you can enjoy optional rock climbing (in summer) but if getting up close to the scenery or seeing it from horseback isn't your thing, you can just chill out and enjoy the view!

Later we visit the village co-operative where you can see and buy authentic, Berber, handmade rugs, kilims and carpets.

##### Day 4 - Sahara Desert:

We leave Todra and make our way across the Jebel Sahro towards Erg Chebbi where magnificent sand dunes signal the start of the Sahara Desert. En route, we stop for a swim and some lunch before arriving at Merzouga where we leave our vehicle and take a camel trek into the desert to a Berber camp. Savour the quiet majesty of the desert and enjoy every moment of this highlight of your Moroccan adventure. This evening, enjoy local food and a night under the Saharan stars. To seal this as an experience of a life time, surf the Sahara Desert and try Dune Boarding!

##### Day 5 - Ouarzazate:

We leave the Sahara Desert and continue our adventure through the Draa Valley along the route of 1000 Kasbahs. This area boasts a beautiful landscape dotted with untouched villages that preserve that sense of times past where you can witness villagers going about their daily routine.

We venture on to Ouarzazate, which African traders once used as a resting place on their journeys up to Europe which makes sense as it is an intersection, triangulated by the Atlas, Draa and Dades Valleys. This area's appeal is best conveyed through its use as a film set for many great films - The Last Temptation of Christ, The Living Daylights and, more recently, Gladiator.

We make it in time for a swim which leaves you refreshed and ready to explore the centre.

##### Day 6 - Ait Benhaddou:

This morning, the adventure continues as we head for Ait Benhaddou, a 'fortified city', situated along the former caravan route between the Sahara Desert and Marrakech. En route, choose from optional quad biking or a visit to the film studio. We then travel over the High Atlas mountains on our way to Marrakech. On a hill along the Ouarzazate River we find Ait Benhaddou. A UNESCO World Heritage site, it boasts great examples of Kasbahs, some of which remain inhabited.

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#### ITINERARY

##### Day 7 - Marrakech:

Glowing red, like a welcoming campfire, against the snow capped High Atlas Mountains, the very name Marrakech conjures up images of a mysterious, distant city; magic carpets and snake charmers; frankincense and myrrh brought in by camel trains.

Explore the medina with its rose-coloured walls and tangle of winding streets and bustling souks. The focal point is the central square, the Djemâa-el-Fna, an extraordinary gathering and market place, full of colour, spicy aromas and traders. It is best seen in the evening when overflowing with food stalls, dancers, acrobats, fortune tellers, musicians and henna artists – a great place to practice your bargaining skills!

Towering over all this 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. Try a traditional hammam, a steam bath followed by an exfoliating massage – it's the ideal end to the day as your adventure holiday comes to an end.

##### Day 8 - Marrakech:

The adventure holiday ends after breakfast

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#### WHAT YOU GET

##### Included

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Arrival transfer from Marrakech airport  
Transport  
Crew (driver and guide)  
Permits  
Food (3 meals a day - EXCLUDING lunch and dinner on Day 7)  
Accommodation  
Guided tour of Marrakech  
Camel trek  
Entrance fees  
Local guides

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Marrakech - Koutoubia Mosque, UNESCO listed site; Djemâa el-Fna, souks  
High Atlas mountains  
Gorge du Dades - "Valley of Roses"  
Todra Gorge  
Erg Chebbi sand dunes - beginning of the Sahara  
Merzouga - camel trek, Berber style camp  
Ouarzazate  
Aït Benhaddou - UNESCO-listed ancient fortified Kasbah city

##### Excluded

Flights  
Tipping kitty (\$40)  
Drinks  
Tips for Nomadic crew (this is completely at your discretion)  
Lunch and dinner on Day 7

#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Rock climbing in Todra Gorge ( 1 hour = 250 DH , 2 hours = 390 DH )
  - Hammam spa in Marrakech ( prices from 150DH )
  - Quadbiking in Ouarzazate ( 2 hours = 590DH, 2 hours for 2 pax = 690DH)
  - Movie studio visit in Ouarzazate ( 30 minutes = 50 DH )
  - Hot air balloon ride over the High Atlas mountains ( 2000 DH )
  - Ourika Valley activities in Marrakech (dependent on local river conditions)
- Canyoning – All year round (half day = 660 DH)  
Tubing – Approx. Nov-Dec & Apr-May ( half day = 660 DH)

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Rafting – Approx. Jan-Mar ( half day = 660 DH )

( DH = MOROCCAN DIRHAM )

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Before you go

#### Visas & permits

Visas are not required for British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, US and other EU nationals for a stay of up to 3 months. Please ensure your passport is valid for six months after your return date and that you get your passport stamped upon entry into Morocco. All other nationalities should contact the Moroccan embassy for details. Visas are your responsibility. Don't forget to check!

#### Travel insurance

All our passengers must be fully insured for travel in Morocco. It is essential that you get the correct level of cover and it is advised that you speak to your travel insurance provider for advice. Please ensure that the policy provides adequate cover for hospital treatment, repatriation flights home in the event of you being too ill to continue the tour, personal accident, personal baggage and associated valuables. Please note that some optional activities may require additional cover as well. In addition you must bring the policy with you as it is obligatory for joining any tour.

#### Vaccinations

It's recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio if you haven't had a booster in the last 10 years. Food and water born diseases are also quite common so we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies) as well. Finally, Morocco is not a high risk Malaria area but if in any doubt please consult a physician or travel clinic for further information.

### On location

#### Currency

GBP£1.00 = MAD13 USD\$1.00 = MAD9 EUR 1.00 = MAD11 MAD = Moroccan Dirham, rates are subject to fluctuation. Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes in major towns and most banks have ATMs. How much spending money is needed, depends largely on the individual. However we currently recommend an average of USD \$20 - \$30 per day though. We can't specify every sundry cost however and you'll need to allow for expenses such as drinks, snacks and the odd souvenir. Travellers Cheques can be difficult to change en route so we recommend you have cash for convenience and bring a card to use in the ATM's, most accept Visa, MasterCard, Electron, Cirrus and Maestro. There are ATM's at Marrakech airport, which you can use upon arrival as well.

#### Climate

Temperatures in Morocco are generally high, particularly during the summer months from May to September, so take sunscreen. However in Winter temperatures can drop right down in the evenings, but as long as you bring some warm clothing and sleeping bag if spending a night in the Sahara or doing a trek then you will be more than comfortable.

#### Altitude

For most tours you do not exceed any altitude that would cause ill effects. However for the Berber Migration in the High Atlas which has an altitude of over 3,000 and is therefore defined as a high altitude area then there are

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different guidelines as exposure to these heights can cause the onset of altitude sickness. This form of sickness which is the biggest health risk for trekkers can cause people to experience differing degrees of symptoms, which include, headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue and shortness of breath. However our treks are designed to ensure there is plenty of time for adequate acclimatisation and cases of mountain sickness are rare. If you do suffer though symptoms will usually decrease in severity during acclimatisation. Throughout the trek it is therefore important to drink plenty of fluids and eat lots of carbohydrate food as well to keep the body properly hydrated and finally and most critically please report any symptoms of altitude sickness immediately to your guide.

#### Packing

##### Luggage

Pack all your gear in a rucksack/backpack for these type of trips. Also bring a day pack, to keep personal items such as your wallet, camera and water bottle. Your rucksack/back pack must not have an exterior frames. Only the soft, flexible variety is permitted. Leave your suitcase at home, they're simply not practical. Don't overdo it as well! Pack sensibly and take garments that are comfortable and cool. Morocco can be very hot in summer but after the sun sets and at high altitudes, the temperatures can drop, so pack accordingly. In terms of sleeping bags, although we provide blankets, on tours from November–April we do recommend a 3/4 season sleeping bag for the night spend in the desert.

##### What to bring

Detailed checklists are available but below is a list of the essential items to bring with you on your tour: • Towel • Torch and batteries • Camera and spare memory card/film • Mosquito repellent • Water bottle • Personal first aid kit, antiseptic gel and wipes • Waterproof/wind proof jacket • A photo-copy of your passport \* Finally, if bringing your smart phone with you, please make sure that you turn your data roaming off, to avoid heavy increases to your bill!

#### Responsible travel

##### Cultural awareness

We cannot emphasise enough that we are travellers and therefore guests. So it is our duty to respect and adjust where possible to the people of the region, their customs and views. Your Tour Leader can let you know more, as well as brief you on all environmental matters.

##### Religious awareness

Morocco is predominantly Muslim and, as such, we would ask all of our customers to respect and adhere to (when appropriate) the dress codes of the Islamic faith. This entails covering of shoulders and knees whenever possible.

##### Security

There are currently no travel restrictions in place in the case of Morocco. However travellers should always be vigilant and aware when travelling.



