

Marrakech & Beyond - 8 Days

go guide

don't leave home without it



A World Of Discovery



Experience Morocco - a magical and exotic land, on this captivating 8 day tour. Lap up atmospheric Marrakech and its colourful medina. Witness striking Todra Gorge, camp in the Sahara and explore amazing Ait Benhaddou - the legendary fortified kasbah.



HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Marrakech - UNESCO-listed Place Djemaa el Fna, (medina, souks and market place)
- Bahia Palace - 19th Century palatial residence of the grand vizier Sidi Moussa
- High Atlas Mountains and views of Mt Toubkal - North Africa's highest peak
- Dades Gorge - imposing valley & stream cut within the mountain range
- Erg Chebbi sand dunes - reaching some 250m high
- Merzouga - Berber village and start point for our camel trek into the great Sahara
- Todra Gorge - towering red canyon
- Ouarzazate - opt to visit the film studio

- Ait Benhaddou - UNESCO-listed fortified kasbah city

What's Included

- Full board – 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 6 dinners including Berber camp dinner
- 6 nights 2 - 3 star hotel and 1 night camping - Berber desert camp in the Sahara
- Arrival transfer from Marrakech airport on day 1
- Todra Gorge walk
- Camel trek into the great Sahara
- Guided tour of Marrakech
- Escorted by and English speaking tour leader
- Specialist local guides at some sites
- All transportation and transfers in private 4x4 or mini van/touring vehicle
- Entrance fees to all included sites
- All road taxes and tolls

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: \$36 - 40 USD
- Entrance Fees: included
- International flights and visa
- Note: On some road journeys, the tour leader may not be in your particular vehicle

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Marrakech

Saturday. Welcome to Morocco! A country steeped in history and culture. Arrival transfer from Marrakech airport to the hotel. Be sure to arrive in time for your welcome meeting at 18.00. The rest of the day is free, if time permits explore the rambling souk, local sights and Djemaa el Fna (the main square). **Overnight - Marrakech (D)**

Day 2 : Gorge du Dades

Marrakech - Dades Gorge. Leaving Marrakech we drive through the Dades Gorge, an aweinspiring valley which extends from the High Atlas to the Jebel Sarhro range in the south.

The Atlas Mountains span some 2,090km covering vast regions of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The mountain chain comprise of a series of parallel ranges running west to east including the Anti-Atlas, High Atlas and Middle Atlas. With an average elevation of 3350 metres, the Atlas claims the highest peak of North Africa. The Berbers (original inhabitants of North Africa) built many impressive kasbahs on the mountain steep and in the valley gorges for defence purposes. En route to Dades Gorge we pass many of these medieval kasbahs and stop at one of the highest vantage points to enjoy a cup of sweet minted tea and take in anoramic views of the impressive snow capped mountain vista. **Overnight - Gorge du Dades (B, L, D)**

Day 3 : Todra Gorge



Dades Gorge - Todra Gorge. The morning is spent at Dades Gorge where you can choose to partake in a leisurely walk/hike through the simple local villages and foothills of the gorge or spend the morning at leisure. After a hearty lunch we drive onward to Todra Gorge.

The gorge is one of the most dramatic sights to be seen anywhere in Morocco. Created millions of years ago, the striking gorge snakes its way through the rugged mountain range. The final 600 m of the Todra gorge are spectacular as the canyon narrows to a flat stony track as little as 10m wide in places with sheer and smooth rock walls up to 160 m high on each side.

It's an easy walk through the rosy red gorge and often we have the opportunity to partake

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in an afternoon session of rock climbing or (in summer) horse riding (book/pay locally). With such spectacular scenery, ever changing colours of the rock face and the hubbub of locals passing through herding camels or selling their wares, it's the perfect place to stop a while. Late this afternoon we visit the village co-operative where hundreds of hand made Berber rugs, kilims and carpets are displayed are offered for sale. **Overnight - Todra Gorge** (B, L, D)

Day 4 : Camel trek into the Sahara



Todra Gorge - Erg Chebbi. Crossing Jebel Sarhro, we enjoy lunch and a swim before travelling down to Erg Chebbi sand dunes, the start point of the mighty Sahara Desert. The Erg Chebbi dunes located near the remote frontier town of Merzouga are renowned for their incredible height and size. In parts the vast sand pile reaches skyward to heights of 150 metres!

The desert winds ensure this astonishing landscape is forever changing and no two days offer the same panorama. Mounting our subservient camels, they relaxedly glide across the desert sands as we happily photograph and take in the breathtaking scenery. Arriving at our simple Berber camp, we enjoy dinner and a night under the Saharan stars.

Please note: Although blankets are provided at the campsite we strongly recommend that you bring your own sleeping bags for hygiene and also for warmth. A sleeping bag is essential between the months of November and April when temperatures at night plummet. **Overnight - Berber Camp** (B, L, D)

Day 5 : Ouarzazate



Erg Chebbi - Ouarzazate. After a stunning sunrise and a tranquil and ambient ride back to our frontier post (camel HQ) there is time to freshen up before driving to the verdant Draa valley. Besides the

natural, historical and architectural wonders that the Draa Valley offers, there are also small villages along the valley where time seems to stand still, so little is the effect of modernity on them. Here, women are fully and always veiled while washing their clothes on the riverbanks and the watchful men seem distant, unaccustomed to foreign visitors. These people, besides speaking Arabic also speak their own dialect of the Berber vernacular, called Tashelhiyt.

Along the route of 1000 Kasbahs, we continue on to Ouarzazate (pronounced as wazza-zat). Sitting at an altitude of 1160 metres in the middle of a barren plateau, Ouarzazate lies at the cross roads of all routes going north, south, east, and west. Its geographical position has made it a key trading post in both ancient and modern times. Capital of a large province, the towns' northern limits run along the southern aspect of the High Atlas and its southern boundary disappears back into the ever present and mysterious saharan desert. Today, the area is still essentially populated by Berber people, who were constructors of the numerous fortified kasbahs and dwellings for which the region is famous. After hotel check in, consider a late afternoon swim. **Overnight - Ouarzazate** (B, L, D)

Day 6 : Ait Benhaddou



Ouarzazate - Ait Benhaddou - Marrakech. This morning you can opt to go quad bike riding or visit the film studio that produced Lawrence of Arabia, Alexander the Great, The Last Temptation of Christ and The Living Daylights.

Arriving at nearby fortified city of Ait Benhaddou - built for defence purposes high on a hill with a bubbling steam within its shadows, the stunningly well preserved medieval city is a true highlight of our tour. Famously used as a backdrop in the film 'Gladiator', its beauty is unequal to any other fortified village in south Morocco. **Overnight - Marrakech** (B, L, D)

Day 7 : Djemaa el Fna



Marrakech. This morning we enjoy a guided tour of old Marrakech. Set within the rosecoloured walls of the medina and a tangle of winding streets lead to bustling souks, the focal point is the central square, the Djemaa 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.

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. Spend the afternoon at leisure, pamper yourself at the local hammam or further explore the city your own way. **Overnight - Marrakech** (B)

Day 8 : Marrakech

Saturday. Spend the morning relaxing or picking up a few last minute souvenirs. Our tour concludes upon hotel check out at 12 noon. (B)

Our Partners in Morocco

This tour is operated in conjunction with Nomadic Expeditions, our partners in Morocco

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Tip Kitty & Pre/Post Accommodation

Please note that the tipping kitty (noted in what's not included) is to be paid locally in US dollars. Pre/post accommodation is to be paid locally in either US dollars or Moroccan Dirhams.

Visas

Visas are not required for British, Australian, Canadian, US and other EU nationals for a stay of up to 3 months. Please ensure your passport has one full blank page and is valid for 6 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 the responsibility of the traveller and not that of On the Go Tours.

Climate

Morocco is a great year round destination, blessed with lots of sunshine and a temperate climate. It can become incredibly hot in the summer months with temperatures 38°C or higher, particularly in July

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and August so use plenty of sun screen, cover up and drink plenty of water. The nights can be cooler especially in the mountains or in the desert and it is windy along the coast throughout the year.

During the winter months (November to February), temperatures usually remain pleasant in the cities, averaging around 20°C, but it is very cold at nights, in the desert and in the Atlas Mountains. There is often snow in the Atlas Mountains from November through until March and temperatures can drop to below freezing - so take plenty of warm clothes including jacket, long-sleeved tops, jumper, gloves and trousers.

Optional Activities

During the free time offered on this tour you are welcome head out and independently explore, relax or take part in one or more optional activities. The following optional activities, may be available on your tour, though not guaranteed. Prices vary and bookings can be made locally.

Marrakech - Hammam (starting from) - MAD150
Marrakech - Hot Air Ballooning - MAD2000
Ourika Valley - Tubing/ Canyoning/ Rafting (seasonal) - MAD660
Ouarzazate - Visit to film studio - MAD50
Ouarzazate - Quad biking - MAD450
Todra Gorge - Rock climbing (summer 1 hr) - MAD250

Time & Voltage

Morocco is 0 hours ahead of GMT. Daylight saving time +1 ahead of GMT. The voltage in Morocco is generally 220V (although on occasions you may find 127V) and outlets fit the two-pin European plug.

Health Requirements

It is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last 10 years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). Please consult a physician or travel clinic for further information.

Currency

The currency of Morocco is: Moroccan Dirham (MAD). Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are easily exchanged. Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes in major towns and most banks have ATMs. Travellers Cheques are very difficult to change. Exchange rates are subject to fluctuations.

- USD 1 = MAD 8.4
- GBP 1 = MAD 13
- AUD 1 = MAD 9
- EURO 1 = MAD 11

Holiday Money

All funds collected in Morocco for entrance fees or optional excursion that you may wish to undertake are payable in local currency (MAD).

How much you spend depends largely on individual tastes and often how much you eat, drink or shop.

We currently recommend an average of USD\$25 - 35 per day on top of optional excursions.

Essential Packing

- A sleeping bag for the Saharan Berber camp (if your tour includes a stay in the desert)
- Lightweight cotton garments in summer, warm clothing for winter (temperatures can get quite low at night)
- Comfortable walking shoes or hiking shoes
- Electrical adapter. Standard voltage is 220V, 50Hz AC. Sockets require a Continental or European style plug (two round pins)
- DEET based mosquito repellent and antihistamine cream
- 2 spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, torch, money belt
- We recommend that you pack all your gear in a rucksack/backpack for, rather than a suitcase.

It's not like home

Travel to far - flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

Mosques & Religion

Although freedom of religious faith is permitted by the Moroccan law, about 99% of people are Sunni Muslim. About 1% of the population is Christian, and less than 0.2 percent is Jewish. With the exception of Hassan II mosque in Casablanca, it is not permitted for non-Muslims to enter mosques in Morocco. If you are entering the Hassan II mosque, please remember to dress conservatively. Ensure limbs are covered and shoes removed when entering any Mosque. Men must refrain from wearing shorts, as must women.

RAMADAN

Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world and adherents of the Muslim faith fast during daylight hours and break their fast with lavish meals and lively celebrations in the evening. Ramadan culminates a month later in a 3 day celebration called Eid al - Fitr. Many shops (excluding those which cater mainly to tourists) and attractions close earlier during Ramadan. As such we will start our tour earlier during this period to make the best use of time, leisure time will be offered in the late afternoon. Forthcoming Ramadan dates are as follows. (approximate) -
21 July - 20 August 2012
09 July - 07 August 2013

Many shops (excluding those which cater mainly to tourists) and attractions close earlier during Ramadan, so our itinerary is slightly altered to ensure we visit all itinerary attractions. Non Muslims are not expected to fast over Ramadan, but it is considered impolite to eat food or drink on the street.

Etiquette

Despite the inevitable ups and downs of travelling abroad, you will generally be shown great hospitality in Morocco. In return, please demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the local customs. Morocco is a Muslim country; so care should be taken to dress respectfully in local towns or villages.

- Ladies should avoid wearing 'clingy, tight or suggestive' attire, and stick to cool, flowing, cottons in small towns, local villages and in rural areas
- Take care to dress conservatively and ensure that limbs are covered and remove footwear prior to entering a mosque.
- Ex-military style clothing should not be worn
- Ask permission before taking photographs of people.
- Beach attire is fine at beach resorts or touristic areas i.e. at Djemma el Fna in Marrakech
- Particular respect should be shown to Muslim women.
- The standard form of greeting is a handshake. Men and women do not kiss at any time as a form of greeting.

Trouble Shooting

These things will most likely never happen, but it's good to be prepared if they ever do. Here are a few tips to keep your trip hassle-free. Morocco is no worse than anywhere else when it comes to crime. The biggest problem seems to be petty theft, including pick-pocketing and bag snatching. Minimise your chances of being robbed with these tips:

- Leave valuables in the hotel safe deposit or better still, at home
- Carry your passport on your person or a photocopy as ID
- Carry your bag close to your person rather than over your shoulder
- Travel in a group or pair, especially if you are female
- Don't catch cabs late at night on your own
- Never drink anything offered to you in the street, unless you opened it yourself

Please note On The Go Tours will not be held liable for loss or damage to personal property under any circumstances.

Arrival Transfers

We provide a complimentary airport arrival transfer on day 1 of your tour from Marrakech Airport or if you arrive early and have booked pre tour accommodation with us. Please proceed to the arrivals hall and look for our representative holding an On The Go Tours/Nomadic Expeditions sign. If you are arriving earlier and have booked your accommodation independently, you will need to

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make your own way to our start hotel, which will be centrally located. The hotel name and address can be found on your tour voucher.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes in the arrival hall) or your flight to Morocco is delayed, please call or send a text message to the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

Hotels in Morocco

The hotels on our group trips are simple, clean, comfortable and centrally located. We try to use traditional hotels and guesthouses with plenty of character wherever possible. On occasions we may stay in Riads, these are charming, traditional Moroccan houses with an interior garden or courtyard. Hotels and guesthouses in Morocco do not always provide towels so you must bring your own. In smaller towns, the choice of accommodation may be limited but we will always book the best accommodation available for our groups. Moroccan hotels do not always have heating, especially in more remote locations such as Todra Gorge and Dades Gorge. Todra Gorge does not have a mains electricity supply, therefore all hotels in the area use generators, which are turned off through the night so it's back to basics and candlelight! Please be aware that hotels in Morocco are not of the same standard as Western hotels or of hotels in some neighbouring destinations such as Egypt and Jordan and facilities are often basic.

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