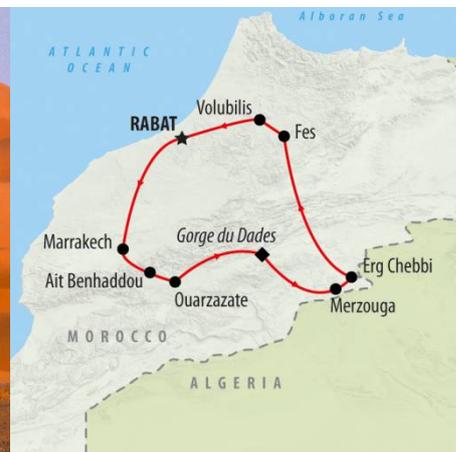


Imperial Cities & Deserts

10 days | Starts/Ends: Marrakech



Soak up the atmosphere in Marrakech's famous Djemaa el Fna, explore Ait Benhaddou - the legendary fortified Kasbah, star gaze in the vast and silent Sahara desert and step back in time in Fes - the world's oldest medieval city.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Marrakech - UNESCO-listed Place Djemaa el Fna, souks and ancient medina
- Ait Benhaddou - UNESCO-listed fortified kasbah city
- Ouarzazate - home to Morocco's film industry
- Dades Gorge "Valley of Roses"
- Erg Chebbi sand dunes - beginning of the Sahara
- Merzouga - Berber village and start point for our camel trek into the great Sahara
- High Atlas Mountains
- Fes - the world's oldest medieval city
- Rabat - the Capital of Morocco

What's Included

- 9 breakfasts
- 8 nights Superior (4 star) hotels and riads (Standard and Deluxe hotel options are also available), 1 night Auberge on the edge of the Sahara

- Marrakech Airport arrival and departure transfers
- Services of a licensed English speaking tour guide at all included sites
- Guided tours of Fes and Marrakech
- Driver, all transfers and transportation in private modern A/C tourism vehicle
- All road taxes and tolls
- Entrance fees to all included sightseeing

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Marrakech

Arrival in Marrakech airport where you will be met by the On the Go guide and transferred to your hotel or riad in the centre of town. Meet your guide for a tour briefing and then spend the rest of the day at leisure. Explore the vibrant Djemaa el Fna square in the evening with the snake charmers, story tellers, food stalls and souks all in full swing. **Overnight - Marrakech**

Day 2 : The Old Medina of Marrakech

This morning enjoy a guided tour of Marrakech, taking in all of the highlights of the Medina (old city centre) - the Koutoubia Mosque, palaces, souks and the old mellah (Jewish quarter). In the afternoon perhaps a

visit to the peaceful Jardins de Majorelle to relax. **Overnight - Marrakech (B)**

Day 3 : Ait Benhaddou



Marrakech - Ait Benhaddou - Ouarzazate. It's an early start today when the transportation and your mountain guide arrives at the Hotel to take you towards the desert. From the flat plain of Haouz, the route climbs southwards and up to the passes of the High Atlas mountains. Along twisty roads with marvellous views and over the high point before descending to the rocky red foothills near Ouarzazate. En route to Ouarzazate we visit Ait Benhaddou, an ancient fortified city, boasting beautiful examples of Kasbahs, some of which remain inhabited today. Granted UNESCO World Heritage Listing, the site has been the setting for many films including Lawrence of Arabia and Gladiator. Night in the Ouarzazate, the film capital of Morocco. **Overnight - Ouarzazate (B)**

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Day 4 : Discover the Sahara



Ouarzazate - Erg Chebbi sand dunes. The journey continues along the valley of the Roses and the Skoura oasis, passing Amerdhil Kasbah. Stop for lunch in the scenic gorge du Dades before continuing towards the Sarhro mountains and the first signs of the Sahara. Along the route there are Khetara , the ancient wells dug by the nomads to find water, now dry. Finally we reach Merzouga at the foot of the great sand dune Erg Chebbi. Time to watch the sun set and the sand change colour as night falls. Spend the night in an Auberge. **Overnight - Erg Chebbi (B)**

Day 5 : Opt for a Saharan Camel Trek

Erg Chebbi - Merzouga. Enjoy a relaxing day at leisure. Perhaps climb up Erg Chebbi before dawn to see the sunrise over the dunes, or enjoy a lie in and take a camel trek across the rolling sand dunes later in the afternoon. **Overnight - Merzouga (B)**

Day 6 : Scenic drive to Fes



Merzouga - Fes. Take a long but very scenic drive today, heading north from the desert and up into the High Atlas past the Ziz Gorge. Past Midelt, the route crosses a grassy plain (in winter) where Nomads of the tribe Ait Atta Tafoukht can be seen pitching their tents and finding grazing for their camels and goats. The road carries on over the next set of

mountains – the Middle Atlas and another facet of Morocco is seen, the Cedar forests. Ancient forests that cloak the hills and are inhabited by monkeys, wild boar and deer. Finally we descend into Ifrane (a Swiss style town and ski resort) and continue onward to Fes. **Overnight - Fes (B)**

Day 7 : Fes

Fes is the oldest and largest medieval city in the world and a bustling hive of activity. This morning take a guided tour around the incredible, old medina - a heady mix of aromas, sounds and sights from the tanneries, spice tubs, pottery and donkeys! Enjoy free time in the afternoon to explore independently. **Overnight - Fes (B)**

Day 8 : Roman City of Volubilis



Fes - Volubilis - Rabat. Today we leave Fes to see the ruins of the Roman city of Volubilis, past the fields of lentils and chickpeas, into the hills around this well preserved city where it's possible to explore the mosaics and forum. After lunch you pass Moulay Idriss and set off for Rabat. Spend the night in the Capital of Morocco. **Overnight - Rabat (B)**

Day 9 : Djemaa el Fna by night



Rabat - Marrakech. You will have free time in the morning to explore Rabat before heading

back past Casablanca to Marrakech. Arriving into Marrakech early evening there will be time for you to do some last minute souvenir shopping! **Overnight - Marrakech (B)**

Day 10 : Marrakech

All good things come to an end and it's time to head home. Transfer to airport included. **(B)**

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Group Tour Tip Kitty & Entrance Fees

A tipping kitty (the amount is noted under 'what is not included' on page one of this document), will be collected by your guide at the welcome meeting on day 1. This is payable in Moroccan Dirhams. USD, Euro or GBP can also be accepted, at the current exchange rate. The tipping kitty is used for the following; hotel porters, hotel waiters, local guides for city tours, airport transfer drivers, Berber camel herders and local restaurant tips.

On our Signature tours:

The tipping kitty does not include a tip for your tour leader or driver and as a guideline we recommend you budget approx USD\$2-3 per day for the tour guide and USD\$1-2 for the driver for a job well done (payable in local currency). Naturally the amount is up to you though, this is simply a suggestion.

Entrance fees are not included on our Signature tours. Entrance fees are payable locally on your tour, the amount will be noted under 'what is not included' and this amount will also be collected by your guide at the welcome meeting on day 1. This is payable in Moroccan Dirhams. Again USD, Euro or GBP are accepted at the current exchange rate.

On our Essential tours:

The tipping kitty does not include a tip for your tour leader (your driver will be included in the tipping kitty). Naturally the amount is up to you though, however we recommend budgeting approx USD\$2-3 per day.

Entrance fees are included. So no need to worry about paying for this.

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Guides & Groups

Some of our group tours are sectors of a larger tour. Some travellers on your tour may only travel with you for part of your tour. It also might be that you end your holiday part way through a longer tour and others in the group continue on.

Please note: if there is only one passenger on the Imperial Morocco & The Blue City tour returning to Marrakech on day 7, then instead of driving, we will arrange a flight from Fes – Marrakech and airport transfers to and from each airport while passengers on the Magical Morocco tour will continue their touring arrangements. For groups of 2+ passengers on the Imperial Morocco & The Blue City sector, we will return to Marrakech in our air-conditioned vehicle.

Time Keeping

In order that we show the best of Morocco in a non-hurried fashion to you, it is imperative you are ready for departure each day. Please do not delay and inconvenience fellow travellers. It is your responsibility to be at the proposed meeting point for the group in time. We will depart at our specified times.

Essential Packing

- A sleeping bag for the Sahara Desert camp if travelling between Oct - Apr if travelling on our Essential tour range (anyone on our signature group tours will not need this, as bedding is provided)
- 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
- Personal first aid kit including Dioralyte
- 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
- Either a rucksack or suitcase is suitable
- A towel for swimming

Morocco Country Guide

Morocco Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Morocco.

UK, EU, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and USA nationals do not require a visa at present to enter Morocco. Please check if you are from another country.

RSA (South African) passport holders need to obtain visas in advance of arrival. Please check your personal visa requirements with the embassy.

Tipping In Morocco

In Morocco it is customary to tip and on our group tours a tipping kitty (the amount is noted under 'what is not included' on page one of this document) will be collected by your guide at the welcome meeting on the day you arrive. This is payable in Moroccan Dirhams. USD, Euro or GBP can also be accepted, at the current exchange rate. The tipping kitty is used for the following; hotel porters, hotel waiters, local guides for city tours, airport transfer drivers, Berber camel herders and local restaurant tips.

The tipping kitty does not include a tip for your Moroccan tour leader or driver and as a guideline we recommend you budget approx Euro 2-3 per day for your tour guide and Euro 1-2 for the driver for a job well done (payable in Moroccan Dirhams. Naturally the amount is up to you though, this is simply a suggestion.

Climate In Morocco

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 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.

Sleeping Bag & Torch

On our Signature tours:

On our Signature tour range (Totally Morocco, Road to Casablanca, Best of Morocco, Magical Morocco & Casablanca to Essaouira tours) sleeping bags will not be required and bed coverings will be provided. You will need to bring a torch for your night in the Sahara.

On our Essential tours:

A lightweight sleeping bag is required for the Sahara Desert camp or a cotton sleep sheet will be adequate if travelling from May to September. You will also need to bring a torch for your night in the Sahara.

Time & Voltage

Morocco is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Savings is currently being observed; however, it changes frequently and is not observed during the holy month of Ramadan. Standard voltage is 220 volts. Primary sockets require the European, 2 pronged variety. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter, and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Currency & Holiday Money

The currency of Morocco is the Moroccan Dirham.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars and Euro can be exchanged in Morocco at various bureau de changes in major cities and towns (please note Australian and New Zealand Dollars as well as South African Rand are often tricky to exchange and often not accepted so we advise against bringing them for exchange), and most banks have ATMs. Credit cards are virtually useless outside main cities and towns. It's advisable to request bank notes in

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smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

How much you spend depends largely on individual tastes and often how much you eat, drink or shop. We currently recommend an average of Euro 20 - 30 per day on top of optional excursions.

Shopping

Morocco is a shoppers' paradise. The souks of Fes, Marrakech and Meknes are full of pottery, carpets and kilims, leather goods, spices and cloth. Keep space in your backpack for your purchases! Our best buys are: carpets – from the High Atlas mountains or a woven and embroidered Kilim; the burnoose, an elegant hooded cape; spices; or traditional pottery and leather from Fes.

IMPORTANT: Set your budget and don't be swayed, remember the caveat – 'Let the buyer beware'. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

Hotels in Morocco

The hotels on our group tours in Morocco are simple, clean, comfortable and centrally located. We try to use local and traditional hotels with plenty of character wherever possible. In smaller towns, the choice of accommodation may be limited, but we will always book the best accommodation available for our groups. Please be aware that hotels in Morocco are not of the same standard as Western hotels and facilities are often basic.

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 the 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 and itineraries will be slightly altered to ensure we visit all attractions, leisure time will be offered in the late afternoon. Non-Muslims are not expected to fast over Ramadan, but it is considered impolite to eat food or drink on the street.

Note: Traffic is exceptionally heavy during Ramadan, especially toward the time of breaking the fast. Forthcoming Ramadan dates are as follows, (approximate) -

23 April – 23 May 2020

12 April – 11 May 2021

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
- The standard form of greeting is a handshake. Men and women do not kiss at any time as a form of greeting

Calling Home From Morocco

It is currently not always possible to use VoIP (voice over internet protocol) services like Whatsapp, Viber, Skype and Facebook Messenger in Morocco. The text options on these services are still fine to use but the calling functions might not always work. It is understood that the Moroccan telecom providers have done this in order to push as much voice calls onto their networks rather than people being able to use these free services.

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

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- 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

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Morocco from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide, Tetanus and Hepatitis A are strongly recommended. While tap water in Morocco is generally considered safe to drink in main cities, it is not advisable in smaller towns and remote areas. It's recommended to only drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants.

Drones Not Permitted

It is forbidden to bring drones into Morocco (even small ones that might fit in hand luggage), a special permit has to be arranged with the appropriate department in Rabat and this can take months to arrange.

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