

# Morocco Family Adventure & Beach

## 12 days | Starts/Ends: Marrakech



Take your family on an adventure from the Sahara Desert to the beaches of the Atlantic coast visiting ancient Marrakech, Unesco listed Ait Benhaddou, the High Atlas mountains and a night under the stars in a Berber camp before a chance to relax in laid back Essaouira. This tour is designed for children aged 5 and over.

### HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

#### Trip Highlights

- Marrakech – UNESCO-listed medina, mosques, palaces and souks (explored independently)
- Bahia Palace and Koutoubia Mosque
- Ouarzazate - home to Morocco's film industry
- Todra Gorge - towering 300m high rose red canyon
- The Sahara Desert - Erg Chebbi sand dunes
- Merzouga - Berber village and start point for our camel trek into the great Sahara
- Dades Gorge - a striking valley and stream cut within the mountain range
- Ait Benhaddou - UNESCO-listed fortified kasbah city

- High Atlas Mountains and views of Mt Toubkal - North Africa's highest peak
- Essaouira - ancient medina, wind swept beaches and current day fishing village

#### What's Included

- 11 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 7 dinners including Berber camp dinner
- 10 nights 3 star hotel and 1 night camping - Berber desert camp in the Sahara
- Arrival transfer from Marrakech airport on day 1
- Sahara Desert camel trek
- Guided tour of Ait Benhaddou
- Escorted by an English speaking tour leader
- Specialist local guides at some sites
- All transportation and transfers in private 4x4 or mini van/touring vehicle
- Essaouira - beachside bliss and free time
- Entrance fees to all included sites
- All road taxes and tolls

#### What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$60 per adult, paid in USD or local currency
- International flights and visa
- Gratuity for your tour guide. Budget approx USD\$2 - 3 per person per day. Tipping your tour guide is an entirely personal gesture
- Note: Children under 12 years are not required to pay the tip kitty

### DETAILED ITINERARY

#### Day 1 : Marrakech

Saturday. Upon arrival at Marrakech airport you will be met and transferred to our hotel. The Welcome Meeting at 18:00 this evening provides the opportunity to meet your guide and fellow travellers before dinner.

#### Overnight - Marrakech (D)

#### Day 2 : Drive through the High Atlas Mountains



Marrakech – Ouarzazate. Leaving Marrakech, we drive over the stunning High Atlas Mountains on the way to Ouarzazate, which used to be the crossing point for African traders heading to the northern cities in Morocco, or travelling up into Europe. Ouarzazate is now the film capital of Morocco and there is an optional excursion to visit the famous film studios which have been used for films such as Kingdom of Heaven, Alexander

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the Great, The Last Temptation of Christ and The Living Daylights.

**Journey Time:** Approx 4 hours **Overnight - Ouarzazate** (B, L, D)

## Day 3 : Sahara camel trek & camp under the Saharan stars



Ouarzazate – Merzouga. This morning we drive through the Anti-Atlas Mountain Ranges to cross The Draa Valley which is famous for its delicious dates. After lunch (not included) there's time to relax and cool down with a swim in Rissani. Then we travel on to Merzouga, gateway to the vast and spectacular Sahara Desert. Here we transfer to our camels for an incredible trek across the huge Erg Chebbi dunes for a night at our remote Berber Camp. We enjoy a relaxing evening in the desert; we can scale the giant sand dunes and watch an incredible sunset before settling down to enjoy local food and listen to Berber music. Tonight we camp under the glittering 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. During these months, in order to reach the camp for sunset, we are unable to stop in Rissani.

**Journey Time:** Approx 5 hours  
**Overnight - Berber Camp - Sahara Desert** (B, D)

## Day 4 : Todra Gorge



Merzouga - Todra Gorge. Leaving the desert, we continue our journey to Todra Gorge. This 1000ft gorge is hemmed in on all sides by vertical limestone cliffs and is known as Morocco's Grand Canyon. From its plunging depths to dizzying heights, the charm of Todra lies in its changing colours as the sun slowly moves from east to west. Lunch will be at our Todra hotel and after lunch will be a free afternoon to relax by the pool, go for a swim or a stroll.

**Journey Time:** Approx 3 hours **Overnight - Todra Gorge** (B, L, D)

## Day 5 : Dades Gorge

Todra Gorge – Dades Gorge. There's free time to explore the gorge again this morning before we enjoy lunch at a very traditional Berber cooperative for Berber carpets, which is owned by local people. We will learn how the Berbers make their carpets, you will have chance to try your bargaining skills if you are interested in buying one. After lunch we will leave the impressive Todra Gorge and make the short journey to Gorge du Dades in the Dades valley. We drive along the Road of 1000 Kasbahs, a green and fertile valley by the Dades River that flows through it giving life to a huge variety of colourful fruit, walnut trees and extraordinary red rock formations. At Dades Gorge there's time to wander and admire the views along the serpentine roads.

**Journey Time:** Approx 1.5 hours **Overnight - Dades Gorge** (B, L, D)

## Day 6 : UNESCO World Heritage Ait Benhaddou



Dades Gorge – Ait Benhaddou. This morning we travel through The Roses Valley (which is famous for its roses), en route to legendary Ait Benhaddou, a fortified city situated along the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech. Granted UNESCO World Heritage listing, the site had been the setting for many films including Lawrence of Arabia and Gladiator. Enjoy a guided tour of this remarkable site, exploring the ancient winding alleys, towers and kasbahs - a handful of which remain inhabited today.

**Journey Time:** Approx 2 hours **Overnight - Ait Benhaddou** (B, L, D)

## Day 7 : Famous Djemaa el Fna Square

Ait Benhaddou - Marrakech. Today we drive back to Marrakech, crossing the rugged High Atlas Mountains and enjoying the wonderful views en route. There's time to freshen up at our hotel before heading out for dinner tonight in the famous square of Djemaa el Fna, an exuberant market place which literally springs to life in the evenings. Filled with spicy aromas, exotic music, market stalls, snake charmers, magicians, storytellers and more, it is undoubtedly the liveliest and most captivating attraction in Morocco!

**Journey Time:** Approx 3.5 hours **Overnight - Marrakech** (B, L, D)

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## Day 8 : Marrakech city tour



This morning we enjoy a guided tour of Marrakech, exploring the winding streets and bustling souks, visiting Bahia Palace, the Jewish Quarter and the beautiful Koutoubia Mosque - the landmark of Marrakech, which towers over the ancient medina. The afternoon is free for a spot of souvenir shopping in the souks, or a final opportunity to soak up the sunshine by the pool. **Overnight - Marrakech (B)**

## Day 9 : Coastal town of Essaouira



Marrakech - Essaouira. This morning we take a public bus to Essaouira (private transfer for larger groups). With a laid-back feel Essaouira is Morocco's hippest coastal town. The windswept fishing port, broad beaches and ancient walled medina with ramparts built into the cliff have long been a favourite refuge for artists, sculptors, food lovers, surfers and backpackers. The medina surrounded by a fortress with 5 main gates you can navigate by, has retained its traditional styles and is laden with quirky shops, coffee houses, antiques, art studios, calligraphers, t-shirt designers and souvenir curios.

There's a relaxed feel to the place and shopping here is a real delight. Locals and visitors alike enjoy strolling along the ramparts

as the sun sets. The port is a hive of activity with fishing boats hauling in their daily catch.

Opt for a swim in the Atlantic, a game of football on the beach with the locals, an afternoon at the hammam, wind surfing or kite surfing (very cool to watch, even if you'd rather not participate yourself). The beach is also great for a stroll and since it runs for about 6 miles (10km) there's plenty of it. By nightfall sit back and relax at any one of the many al fresco cafes, pubs or bars serving cold beer and the freshest seafood. Free time to explore Essaouira, try a hammam and practice your bargaining skills in the souks. **Overnight - Essaouira (B)**

## Day 10 : Explore your way



Enjoy a free day relaxing on the beach, topping up your tan, shopping in the quaint village souk or choose from a number of exciting optional activities such as quad biking, horse riding, surfing or wind surfing available about town. **Overnight - Essaouira (B)**

## Day 11 : One last swim in the Atlantic



Essaouira - Marrakech. This morning offers free time for you relax or seize the opportunity for one last dip in the Atlantic. After lunch we return to delightful Marrakech (by public bus for small groups) for the final night. Take

the opportunity for a final spot of shopping in Djemaa el Fna or head out with the group for a final dinner.

**Journey Time:** Approx 3 hours **Overnight - Marrakech (B)**

## Day 12 : Farewell...

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

## HOTELS

The hotels listed below are ones which we frequently use on this tour. We reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard when necessary.

### El Andalous Hotel & Spa

Just 10 minutes from the airport, the El Andalous Hotel and Spa offers a welcome respite from the hubub of the city. Evoking the golden age of Arab-Andalusian culture; exotic and romantically rich. Guest rooms are well furnished with excellent en suite facilities as well as private balconies. The hotel pool is great place to relax by and enjoy a tasty beverage or two. The medina is just a 20 minute walk from here or a cab can get you there in a few minutes!



### Les Jardins

A fairly new hotel in Ouarzazate, the Hotel les Jardins is in the traditional style of a Moroccan kasbah, with spacious rooms. The hotel is set in exquisitely manicured gardens, which provide guests with a much needed breath of fresh air. The experience is complete with a pool and restaurant, where visitors can while away the hours in the warm, stary evenings. The hotel is on the outskirts of Ouzarzate and has numerous restaurants and shops nearby.

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**Hotel Amazir**

## Kasbah de la Vallee

Kasbah de la Vallee is decorated according to the Moroccan tradition, with patterns and colours typical of the south. The rooms are comfortable, with private bathrooms. Homemade Moroccan delicacies are served at the restaurant and created using local produce. Situated at the entrance of Dades gorge, the hotel has a fantastic view over the river Dades that runs between the high cliffs. The hotel is in front of a small stony creek where the nomads regularly come to water their herds.



**La Rose Du Sable**

## Hotel Miramar

Enjoying an enviable location just a 15-minute walk from the beach and some of the city's key sights, Hotel Miramar combines 4-star comfort with local convenience. Each of the 45 guest rooms' benefit from a separate sitting area, room service and satellite television, there's also free WiFi throughout the property. After a day of sightseeing guests can unwind in the on-site spa, which offers a variety of treatments, or those that prefer to relax during the day can opt to head to the hotel's private sand beach.



## 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 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.

Departure transfers are not included. A taxi to the airport will cost approx MAD100 and can be booked locally.

## 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 optional activities listed at the end of this Go Guide, may be available on your tour, though not guaranteed. Prices may vary and bookings can be made locally.

The half day hot air ballooning excursion from Marrakech includes: Land rover transportation, a traditional breakfast, a 1 hour hot air balloon flight in front of the High Atlas Mountains, a visit to a local Berber house and a camel ride in the palmerie of Marrakech.

Rock climbing at Todra Gorge is not offered if it is raining or very windy. Please also note that rock climbing and quad biking are not suitable for travellers under the age of 16.

## Our Partners in Morocco

**This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.**

The sightseeing group may vary in size from 2 – 16 persons.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

## Essential Packing

- A sleeping bag for the Sahara Desert camp if travelling between Oct - Apr. From May - Sep a cotton sleep sheet will be adequate. If booking our 'Sahara Hotel Upgrade' (available on our Totally Morocco, Road to Casablanca, Best of Morocco & Casablanca to Essaouira tours) you will not need to bring either of these.
- 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

## 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.

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. On all other group tours they are included. If Entrance fees are payable locally on your tour, the amount will be noted

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## 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

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

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.

Please note that the sleeping bag/sleep sheet and torch are only required if you are camping and will not be needed if you have booked our Sahara Hotel Upgrade.

### 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 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,

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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) -

05 May – 04 June 2019

24 April – 23 May 2020

14 April – 13 May 2020

## 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.

## Troubleshooting

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

## 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.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Morocco

Essaouira - horse riding 1 hr 250DH

Essaouira - horse riding 2 hrs 300DH

Essaouira - horse riding 3 hrs 390DH

Marrakech - hammam 150DH

Marrakech - hot air ballooning (half day excursion) 2000DH

Ouarzazate film studio 50DH

Todra Gorge - rock climbing 1 hr 250DH

Todra Gorge - rock climbing 2 hrs 390DH

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