

Geminids Meteor Shower

15 Days | Starts/Ends: Marrakech



Become starstruck! Camel trek into the Sahara for an unforgettable night of stargazing at the peak of the spectacular Geminids Meteor Shower. In fifteen action packed days, you'll also get to Wander through the labyrinthine souks of Fes and Marrakech, explore legendary Casablanca, relax by the Atlantic coast in Essaouira and chart Roman ruins at Volubilis.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Meteor Shower - Experience the amazing Geminids Meteor Shower in the heart of the Sahara Desert
- Marrakech – UNESCO-listed medina, mosques, palaces and souks (explored independently)
- Casablanca and its incredible Hassan II Mosque
- Rabat - Morocco's lively capital
- Meknes - Amazing Imperial city
- Rif Mountains
- Midelt - Immerse yourself in the Berber way of life with a visit to a Berber family home
- Chefchaouen – Overlooked by the Goat Horns Mountains

- Volubilis – UNESCO-listed Roman ruins
- Fes – The world's oldest medieval city
- Erg Chebbi/Merzouga sand dunes - The beginning of the Sahara
- Todra Gorge – Morocco's Grand Canyon
- Essaouira – UNESCO-listed medina, great beaches and surf
- Valley and waterfalls in the Atlas Mountains

What's Included

- Breakfast daily, 2 lunches and 6 dinners inclusive of a Berber camp dinner
- 13 nights 2-4 star hotels and 1 night camping at a Berber camp in the Sahara
- Guided sighting - Chefchaouen, Volubilis, Fes and Ait Benhaddou
- Camel trek into the Sahara Desert
- Escorted by an English speaking tour leader
- Specialist local guides at some sites
- All entrance fees to included sights
- Arrival transfer from Marrakech Airport on day 1
- Transportation and transfers in private 4x4 or mini van/touring vehicle, public bus Essaouira to Marrakech on day 13
- All road taxes and tolls

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$65pp, paid in USD or local currency
- International flights and visa

- Tip for your tour leader. We recommend you allow USD\$2-3 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Marrakech

6th December. Welcome to Morocco! You'll be met at Marrakech Airport and transferred to your hotel. Be sure to arrive in time for our welcome meeting and dinner at 18:00.
Overnight - Marrakech (D)

Day 2 : Casablanca

Marrakech - Casablanca. En-route this morning we travel up to Casablanca. Made famous by Humphrey Bogart in the film "Casablanca". We then have the option of visiting the stunning Hassan II mosque, which has the tallest minaret and the third largest mosque in the world, it can hold 25,000 worshippers at any one time.

Please note: Hassan II mosque is not available to the public during Ramadan.

Journey Time: Approx 3.5 hours

Overnight - Casablanca (B, D)

Day 3 : Rabat & Meknes

Casablanca - Rabat - Meknes. This morning we head straight to Rabat, Morocco's capital city. We will spend the morning visiting Oudaia

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Geminids Meteor Shower

Kasbah, Hassan tower, the Royal Palace and Chellah. After lunch we will move on to the third of our Imperial cities Meknes to enjoy some free time. **Overnight - Meknes (B)**

Day 4 : Chefchaouen



Meknes - Chefchaouen. Today we'll embark on a tour of the Roman ruins at Volubilis, the largest ancient site of Morocco. UNESCO-listed, the site dates back to AD40 and once ruled the entire Roman province of Mauritania. We'll then head on to Chefchaouen for a guided tour this afternoon. High up in the Rif mountains, Chefchaouen boasts a beautiful blue door and white walled medina that was originally a Berber post. The main square is the heart of Chefchaouen, with the Kasbah (built back in the 18th century), central mosque and cafes with authentic menus. The busy market is a mix of traditional Moroccan and tourist fare. **Overnight - Chefchaouen (B)**

Days 5-6 : Fes



Chefchaouen - Fes. Enjoy some free time in Chefchaouen this morning - relax at the hotel or spend your time exploring this beautiful city. We travel on to Fes in the afternoon. Fes is the oldest and largest medieval city in the world, and its medina is a heady mix of aromas, sounds and sights. To navigate, follow one of the five, themed tourist circuits. There are plenty of mosques and palaces to visit, but be aware that only Muslims can enter Mosques in Morocco.

On day 6 we embark on a fully guided tour of the city of Fes. Explore the tanneries, souks, potteries, and the Medina, and learn the fascinating history of the city. We'll later return to the hotel to get ready for an optional night of Moroccan entertainment and food at a restaurant in town. **Overnight - Fes (B:2)**

Day 7 : Midelt

Fes - Midelt. This morning we journey over the Moyen Atlas to stop at Midelt. This is a beautiful alpine area. Surrounded by huge pine trees and a tranquil mountain setting, this is a great spot to cool down and relax after the hustle and bustle of Fes. We will enjoy a small hike in the afternoon. We spend the night in this mountain location. **Overnight - Midelt (B, L, D)**

Day 8 : Geminids Meteor Shower



Midelt - Erg Chebbi. Today we embark on a scenic drive followed by an optional tasty Moroccan lunch (not included) and an afternoon relaxing and swimming. Then we head out towards the Erg Chebbi dunes located near the remote frontier town of Merzouga. The dunes are renowned for their incredible height and size. In parts the vast sand pile reaches skyward to heights of 150 metres! We enjoy some free time to enjoy a swim (only available in summer) before transferring to our camels we trek into the Sahara for a night at our Berber Camp. Tonight, we enjoy a local meal, music and an amazing night out under the Saharan stars.

The stars in the Sahara are fantastic at the best of times - however tonight they should be extraordinary as we hope to witness the peak of the Geminids Meteor Shower. This annual event has been observed for over

500 years and gets its names from the constellation Gemini, because it is said to emanate from here. The shower is one of the world's brightest, has been known to produce fire balls and can create 100-150 meteors an hour at its peak.

Please note: Although blankets are provided at the campsite you will need to bring your own sleeping bag for extra warmth.

Camel Trek: approx 1.5 hours

Overnight - Merzouga (B, D)

Day 9 : Todra Gorge

Erg Chebbi - Todra Gorge. Leaving the desert, we move on to Todra Gorge. This 1000ft gorge is hemmed in on all sides by vertical limestone cliffs and is also called Morocco's Grand Canyon. We will have an early lunch at the village co-operative where you can see and buy authentic, Berber, handmade rugs, kilims and carpets. The afternoon can be spent exploring the Gorge, walking through the palmerie or if you're feeling adventurous, there is the option to rock climb (this activity is dependent upon weather conditions, book/pay locally). **Overnight - Todra Gorge (B, L, D)**

Day 10 : Ait Benhaddou



Todra - Ouarzazate - Ait Benhaddou. We bid fond farewell to Todra this morning and travel on to Ait Benhaddou via Ouarzazate, where we stop for lunch and an optional tour of the film studios, famous for films such as Gladiators, The Last Temptation of Christ and the Living daylights (book/pay locally). On a hill along the Ouarzazate River we find Ait Benhaddou, a UNESCO World Heritage site, that boasts great examples of kasbahs, some of which remain inhabited. This afternoon we have a guided tour of the famous kasbah and village where Lawrence of

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Geminids Meteor Shower

Arabia and Gladiator were filmed. **Overnight - Ait Benhaddou** (B, D)

Days 11-12 : Essaouira



Ait Benhaddou - Essaouira. Today's drive offers panoramic views as we traverse the high Atlas Mountains on our way to Essaouira. A colourful old city and fishing village is located within 15th century Portuguese fortifications. Just outside the town great beaches and an Atlantic surf beckon.

Relax on the beach or alternatively explore the UNESCO-listed medina with its various souks and woodcarving workshops. Any city gate leads to the Medina, so you're unlikely to get lost. The beach is in front of the Medina and there are plenty of cafes with terraces, both ideal for relaxing for a few hours. Blue doors and window frames abound as do the artists shops – buy a carpet or Thuya wood carving or sit on the beach sipping a mint tea as the sun sets, an antidote to the bustle of the Imperial cities. During our time here there's the option to take part in horse trekking or quad biking (book/pay locally). **Overnight - Essaouira** (B:2)

Days 13-14 : Djemaa el Fna



Essaouira - Marrakech. We take a supratours public bus from Essaouira back to Marrakech this morning, to explore the last of Morocco's four Imperial cities we visit on this tour. Marrakech set against the snow-capped Atlas

Mountains. Its great pride and landmark is the Koutoubia Tower, sister to the Tower of Hassan in Rabat and the Giralda Tower in Seville. It is said that after the third of these was completed, the sultan had the eyes of his architect put out, lest he should build another more beautiful tower elsewhere. No visit to the city is complete without a visit to the city's UNESCO-listed medina & Djemaa-el-Fna, an extraordinary gathering and market place. An optional guided tour of Marrakech is offered with a local payment of 100 Dirhams, alternatively you can explore the city yourself or relax by the pool. **Overnight - Marrakech** (B:2)

Day 15 : Marrakech

20th December. Marrakech - breakfast. Spend the morning relaxing or picking up a few last minute souvenirs. Our tour concludes upon hotel check out at 12 noon.(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Moroccan House Hotel

In the centre of Casablanca, Moroccan house is a charming hotel. Designed similar to a traditional Riad, this quirky residence offers delicious Moroccan food as well as getting the chance to prepare it yourself. Guest rooms include comfortable beds, complete with frilly lace canopies and all the modern conveniences you could ask for. Located a few steps away from the port and a short drive to the Hassan II mosque.



Hotel Diwan

Located close to the city centre, Hotel Diwan is a contemporary hotel just a short walk from the main train station. The modern guest rooms are air conditioned with flat screen TVs and en suite facilities. The onsite restaurant offers a buffet breakfast every morning as well as an array of international cuisine in the evenings for dinner. The hotel also has an on site gym, spa and complimentary wi-fi is available.



Hotel Akouas

The Akouas is a comfortable and modern hotel, with traditional Moroccan architecture and comfortable rooms.



Hotel Madrid

Hotel Madrid offers a fantastic location in the centre of Chefchaouen, just 300 metres from the blue streets of the old town and a short stroll from the bustling Place Outa el Hammam and Kasbah. Its standout feature is its traditional décor, with the hotel's Moroccan lounges and guestrooms all painted in bright colours and patterns, giving the property a very authentic feel. Some of the rooms also feature four-poster beds and the patio is a great spot to unwind after a day of sightseeing.



Hotel Arena

Boasting a garden, outdoor pool and mountain views, Hotel Arena offers a great

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location for visiting the Royal Palace and the bustling medina of Fes. Each of the rooms is fitted with a balcony allowing for city or pool views, alongside modern amenities such as air conditioning and WiFi. Guests can enjoy a continental breakfast in the onsite restaurant and take advantage of the hotel's spa facilities. Alongside a sauna and massage treatments, guests can unwind with a traditional hammam steam bath complete with a facial scrub and body masks.



Kasbah Asmaa

The Kasbah Asmaa Midelt is a traditional style hotel with spacious and comfortable rooms. The hotel is surrounded by gardens and mountains.

Desert Camp

Set amongst the towering dunes of Erg Chebbi, the Berber camp is designed with a traditional Moroccan theme. The permanent tents include multiple beds and electricity (after night fall) Camping out in the desert is a wonderful experience, due to the lack of light pollution, the stars come out in abundance and really are a sight to behold.



Kasbah Amazir

Nestled in a small oasis surrounded by palm trees, the traditional-style Kasbah Amazir is the perfect haven for those looking to relax. Guestrooms feature Berber carpets and bamboo furniture, with some also offering a private terrace. Enjoy a dip in the swimming pool or take a stroll in the gardens. For those looking to fill their holiday with a spot of adrenaline, hikes and climbs can be arranged nearby. After a long day you

can enjoy a drink and traditional Moroccan dishes in the on-site restaurant.



La Rose Du Sable

La Rose Du Sable is a Kasbah-style property located within minutes of the fortified town of Air Benhaddou. Each traditionally decorated guestroom is ensuite and boasts spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. Guests can relax by the pool or on the Berber lounge terrace, while enjoying delicious local specialties such as tagine and couscous.



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.



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!



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.

Tipping kitty and departure transfer

At the start of your tour we will collect a Tip Kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how much to tip. It will be collected by your tour leader at the Welcome Meeting on day 1 and is payable in Moroccan Dirhams (USD, Euro or GBP is also accepted at the current exchange rate). The Tipping Kitty is distributed throughout your tour to hotel porters, hotel waiters, local guides for city tours, airport transfer drivers, Berber camel herders and local restaurant tips.

This amount does not include a tip for your tour leader. For a job well done, we suggest USD\$2-3 per day, per traveller for your tour leader. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

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

Optional activities

During free time you can head out and independently explore, relax or take part in one or more optional activities. The optional activities are booked locally and are subject to availability, prices are indicative.

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If your tour includes the optional ballooning. 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.

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

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Morocco Country Guide

Welcome to Morocco - Arrival transfer

We provide a complimentary airport arrival transfer on day 1 of your tour 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 sign. Pre and post tour accommodation can be arranged upon request, please contact us for rates.

If you are arriving earlier and you 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 (standard text message, not Messenger or WhatsApp) to the emergency contact number as stated on your Tour Voucher.

Visas & passports

Visa requirements are subject to change and 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.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book all services. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. For information about visas, head to www.onthegotours.com/Morocco/Visas

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! 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 leathers from Fes.

In the tourism industry it's common practice for commission to be offered in exchange for recommending particular shops or suppliers. This can become an issue when clients feel obliged to purchase. We do our best to avoid this by monitoring all shopping experiences offered.

All shopping experiences on your tour have been noted in the itinerary and they have been carefully selected based upon positive feedback from On The Go travellers. You are under no obligation to partake in a listed shopping experience and you are most welcome to wait inside or outside the premises.

Although we only visit reputable retailers, please note that we cannot explicitly guarantee the quality of their products. All purchases made whilst on holiday with us are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with your purchase. On The Go cannot be held responsible for any items that you buy if they fail to meet expectation, or any shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

Health requirements & water

You should seek medical advice for vaccinations and about medications before travelling. While tap water in Morocco is generally considered safe to drink in main

cities, it is not advisable in smaller towns and remote areas. Drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants.

Essential packing

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit www.worldclimate.com

- Lightweight cotton garments in summer, warm clothing for winter (temperatures can get quite low at night)
- Comfortable walking shoes or hiking shoes
- Universal travel adaptor
- DEET based mosquito repellent and antihistamine cream
- First aid kit including Dioralyte
- Tour Voucher and a copy of your travel insurance policy, spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, torch and money belt
- Either a rucksack or suitcase is suitable. A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- A towel for swimming
- A torch for your night in the Sahara Desert
- If travelling on our Essential (Budget) group tour range, a sleeping bag for the Sahara Desert camp is required if travelling between Oct - Apr, a cotton sleep sheet will be adequate if travelling from May to September (Signature group tour travellers do not need this, as bedding is provided)

Drones are 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.

Hotels

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

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It's not like home, what to expect & Ramadan

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.

Please visit www.onthegotours.com/Morocco/Travel-tips-and-useful-info for local customs, currency, etiquette, WiFi and other helpful information to prepare for your holiday.

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) 12 April – 11 May 2021

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Morocco

Essaouira - cooking class 250DH

Essaouira - horse riding 1 hr 250DH

Essaouira - horse riding 2 hrs 300DH

Essaouira - horse riding 3 hrs 390DH

Fes - 3 course meal & entertainment 250DH

Marrakech - hammam 150DH

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

Ouarzazate film studio 80DH

Todra Gorge - rock climbing 1 hr 250DH

Todra Gorge - rock climbing 2 hrs 390DH

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