Tour Code
MO10

ADVENTURESABROAD

QUINTESSENTIAL MOROCCO

Casablanca, Chefchaouen, the Imperial Cities & The Sahara

15 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Casablanca

Today we arrive in Casablanca, a dynamic modern city built upon layers of history. Believed to have started as a Phoenician and Berber settlement, the area later became a port. After periods of Portuguese influence and destruction, the modern city largely emerged following an 18th-century earthquake, growing into Morocco's economic hub. Casablanca offers a unique feel, where its historical roots blend with a vibrant, forward-looking energy, creating a distinct urban character.

Please note: Depending on departure date and regional logistics, this itinerary is occasionally operated in reverse order. All destinations, experiences, and inclusions remain identical.

Overnight in Casablanca.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Casablanca - Rabat - Chefchaouen

Before leaving Casablanca, we'll visit the Hassan II Mosque, a glorious structure believed to be only second in size to Islam's most important site, Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The mosque was inaugurated in August 1993, the culmination of five years of intensive labour by over 30,000 workers and craftsmen. Non-Muslims may enter as part of a guided tour.

From Casablanca we travel to Rabat, Morocco's third oldest Imperial City and modern capital. Among the sites in Rabat that we will visit are the Hassan Tower and the Mohammed V Mausoleum. After a break for lunch, we continue to Chefchaouen, arriving in time for dinner.

Chefchaouen is renowned globally for its captivating medina, a labyrinth of shady alleyways where whitewashed houses adorned with striking blue turquoise doors and wrought iron windows create a visually stunning scene. Colourful tile-covered roofs add to the charm, while busy squares offer glimpses of local life connected by the town's characteristic steep alleyways.

Overnight in Chefchaouen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Chefchaouen Touring

Today belongs entirely to one of Morocco's most photogenic -- and most genuinely enchanting -- destinations. Chefchaouen, founded in 1471 as a refuge for Andalusian Muslims and Jews expelled from Spain, has grown from a remote mountain stronghold into a town that rewards slow, unhurried exploration. Its famous blue-washed medina — the shade varying from pale powder to deep indigo depending on the quarter and the hour -- reflects a living tradition, with locals still re-blueing their walls each spring.

Our orientation walk threads through the medina's steep, irregular lanes, passing through the central Plaza Uta el-Hammam, anchored by the Tarik Ben Ziad mosque and the kasbah's ramparts. Inside, an Andalusian garden and ethnographic museum hold collections of local embroidery, ceremonial dress, and the iconic djellaba, a garment with its origins in this very region. We'll also visit a traditional oil mill — a glimpse into an industry that sustains the Rif valleys to this day, with more than 1,500 operating in the surrounding region.

The afternoon is yours. The souks carry genuine local character -- wool blankets, leather goods, hand-crafted ceramics -- in a refreshingly unhurried atmosphere. Those with energy for a short climb will find the Spanish mosque above the medina rewards the effort with panoramic views of the blue rooftops below, especially lovely in late afternoon light. At the base of the old walls, the Ras el-Maa waterfall cafe terrace and mint tea will claim you.

Overnight in Chefchaouen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Chefchaouen - Fes

This morning we bid farewell to Chefchaouen and set off for the imperial city of Fes. Our full-day drive winds first through the Rif Mountains, with vistas of rolling green hills, rugged terrain and panoramic views.

Along the way we pause in Ouazzane, a town long associated with Sufism and a place of pilgrimage for both Muslims and Jewish visitors, who come to venerate the tomb of Rabbi Amram ben Diwan. This is a short break rather than a full visit, with time to stretch our legs, take some refreshment and wander the old quarter and souks.

As we leave the mountains behind, the landscape opens into the fertile Sais Plain, with olive groves and cultivated fields leading us toward Fes. We arrive in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Fes.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 From Fes: Exploring Volubilis & Meknes

Today we embark on a full-day excursion from Fes to delve into Morocco's rich history, visiting the ancient Roman city of Volubilis and the imperial city of Meknes.

Our journey begins with a drive to Volubilis, a UNESCO World Heritage site that stands as the best-preserved Roman ruins in Morocco. Situated on a fertile plain, this once-thriving outpost of the Roman Empire offers a fascinating glimpse into life here centuries ago. As we explore the site, you'll marvel at the remarkably intact mosaics, depicting scenes from mythology and daily life, the towering Basilica, and the impressive Triumphal Arch. Our local guide will bring the history of this distant Roman province to life, painting a picture of its former glory. You'll have ample time to wander and photograph this evocative location.

We also see the sacred town of Moulay Idriss (photo stop only). Moulay Idriss is a dramatic sight, houses and mosques piled up around two rock outcrops, with the 'zaouia,' or sanctuary, in between.

A short drive takes us to Meknes, an imperial city that reached its zenith under the rule of Sultan Moulay Ismail in the 17th century. Here we'll discover the grandeur of its past, starting with the monumental Bab Mansour, a magnificent gate considered one of the most beautiful in Morocco. We'll also visit the Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail, a place of serene beauty and historical significance. Prepare to be impressed by the sheer scale of the Heri es-Souani, the vast royal granaries and stables, which hint at the power and ambition of the Alaouite dynasty. We'll have time for lunch in Meknes and to absorb the atmosphere of this less-crowded imperial city before returning to Fes in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Fes.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Fes: City Tour

Today we will have a full-day guided walking tour of Fes El Bali, the extraordinary medieval walled city (we'll have several breaks for a quick rest/refreshment and a longer one for lunch). Once inside the gates of this great spectacle, you will see an entirely different view of life in Morocco. In contrast to the well-planned Ville Nouvelle, the old city is a labyrinth of alleys and lanes lined with shops, mosques, homes and schools. In 1980 UNESCO designated the medina a World Heritage Site.

Our on-foot exploration of Fes begins with a breathtaking panoramic view of the entire city from its northern vantage point. This offers a fantastic orientation, allowing you to appreciate the sprawling Medina and its surrounding hills. We then delve into the craftsmanship of the Potters' Quarter, where you can witness traditional ceramic making techniques passed down through generations. Following this, we'll see the impressive gates of the Royal Palace (exterior view) and explore the Mellah, the historic Jewish quarter, with its distinct architecture and

atmosphere.

Also along our route, we'll visit the exquisite Medersa Bou Inania, a stunning example of Marinid architecture. We'll also view the exterior of the revered Kairouine Mosque, one of the oldest universities in the world (non-Muslims cannot enter).

Our walk continues to the sacred Tomb of Moulay Idriss II, the founder of Fes (exterior view), the ornately tiled Nejjarine Fountain, the bustling Blacksmiths' squares, and the intricate Weaving Quarter. Our sensory journey culminates at the famous Dyers' souk and the traditional tanneries, where you can witness the age-old methods of dyeing leather, a truly unique spectacle.

Finally, as our tour concludes, we'll take in another panoramic view of Fes, this time from the south side of the city, offering a different perspective on this captivating place.

Overnight in Fes.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Fes - Ifrane - Erfoud

Today we embark on another scenic full-day journey through the diverse landscapes of Morocco, heading towards the gateway to the Sahara. Our route takes us through the Middle Atlas Mountains, where we'll experience its unique character.

Our first stop will be Ifrane, a charming town with an unexpected alpine feel, often likened to a Swiss resort. Here, you'll have some time to explore its neat streets, perhaps see the iconic stone lion, and enjoy the refreshing atmosphere.

Continuing our ascent into the Middle Atlas, we'll enter the Cedar Forest, home to the playful Barbary macaques. We'll make a stop here for a chance to observe these fascinating creatures in their natural habitat amidst the ancient cedar trees.

Our journey then takes us towards Midelt, travelling through apple-growing regions and offering opportunities for scenic photo stops, including the panoramic Col de Ziad. As we approach Midelt, the imposing Djebel Ayachi of the High Atlas will come into view. We'll pause in Midelt for lunch. In the afternoon, we'll continue our drive towards Erfoud, crossing the Tizi N Talrhemt pass and noting the dramatic Ziz Gorge. As we near Erfoud, you'll begin to see the landscapes transitioning towards the pre-Saharan environment, with views of the Ziz Valley oases and traditional adobe-style constructions (ksour).

Late afternoon arrival in Erfoud, the threshold to the Sahara. This evening you should prepare an overnight bag with essentials for tomorrow's desert excursion to Merzouga. We'll be transferring to 4x4 vehicles tomorrow, leaving our main luggage behind on the bus before heading to Merzouga for the night. We'll rejoin the bus the following morning when we return to Erfoud.

Overnight in Erfoud.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Rissani & Merzouga Dunes

This morning we'll explore the region around Erfoud and Rissani, delving into the history and local culture. We'll begin with a visit to Rissani, the historical capital of the Tafilalt region and the origin of Morocco's current ruling dynasty. Here we'll see the peaceful Alaouite Mausoleum and wander through the vibrant local market (souk), a colourful hub of daily life offering everything from produce to handicrafts. We'll also explore a traditional Ksar, an ancient fortified village, to appreciate its unique architecture.

Depending on local opportunities, we might also visit a fossil workshop near Erfoud, this area being known for its unique black marble embedded with fossils. You'll learn about this fascinating aspect of the region's geology.

After a break for lunch, we'll transfer to 4x4 vehicles for an exhilarating journey into the Sahara towards the majestic Erg Chebbi dunes of Merzouga. This adventure takes us partly off-road across the desert landscape, offering fantastic views of the changing terrain. If possible, we'll pause for a traditional tea break in a nomad encampment under a tent and make a stop for panoramic photos of the towering sand dunes—the Erg Chebbi is the largest and highest dune system in the Moroccan Sahara.

We'll arrive at our desert-edge accommodation in Merzouga, where an unforgettable camel excursion awaits. In the late afternoon, we'll

embark on a roughly 20-minute camel ride into the heart of the dunes to witness a spectacular Saharan sunset. As the sun sinks below the golden sands, you'll experience the profound silence and otherworldly beauty of the desert. Following this magical moment, it will be another 20-minute ride back to our auberge.

Tonight we'll stay at our comfortable lodging on the edge of the Erg Chebbi, with dinner scheduled to allow time for those returning from the camel trek to freshen up and relax. You can enjoy the desert evening under vast starlit skies, sharing stories of the day's adventure.

Overnight at Merzouga desert auberge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Merzouga - Todra Gorge - Ouarzazate

This morning we'll embark on an exciting full-day journey from Merzouga to Ouarzazate, exploring the stunning landscapes and cultural heritage of the Moroccan desert. Our adventure begins with a scenic 4WD drive from Merzouga back to Erfoud, where we'll transfer to our bus (and be reunited with our main luggage) and take a moment to freshen up.

From Erfoud, we'll head to the ancient Khattara irrigation system, a remarkable feat of engineering that showcases the ingenuity of our ancestors. We'll have a photo stop at Tirnehir and then visit the breathtaking Todra Gorges, where towering cliffs rise above the river.

After a lunch break in Tirnehir, we'll continue our journey along the Dades River Valley, passing through picturesque villages and oases. We'll make photo stops at Boulmane du Dades and Kelaa Mgouna, where we can learn about the local rose water production.

Our final stop will be at the stunning Kasbah Skoura, a 17th-century fortress that offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape. We'll take a guided walk around the kasbah and explore the nearby village.

As we arrive in Ouarzazate, we'll check into our hotel after a day filled with spectacular scenery and cultural insights.

Overnight in Ouarzazate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Ouarzazate - Ait Benhaddou - Marrakech

This morning we travel to the ancient grandeur of the Kasbah of Ait Benhaddou, a UNESCO World Heritage site that truly embodies the timeless beauty of Morocco. This remarkably preserved ksar, with its towering mud-brick walls and traditional architecture, seems to rise organically from the hillside. As we explore its winding alleyways and learn about its history, you'll understand why it has served as a breathtaking backdrop for countless films and continues to captivate visitors with its authentic charm.

Our journey then continues towards Marrakech; this route allows us to appreciate the changing scenery as we leave the desert landscapes behind and head towards the plains surrounding Marrakech. If time permits, we may be able to make a stop at a local argan oil producer, where we can learn about the production of this precious oil. As we approach Marrakech, the scenery becomes flatter and greener, as the city is the centre of a large palmerie oasis. You will notice an abundance of the pink mud-brick buildings amid this tree-filled city. With it's unique character and charm, Marrakech lures visitors with a hospitable climate and superb location.

This evening we visit the famous Djemma el-Fna, a place like nowhere else in North Africa. This "Assembly of the Dead," offers a spectacle that is a must-see when visiting Morocco. In the busy square you will witness a carnival of musicians, snake charmers, acrobats, story-tellers, witch doctors, dentists, clowns, monkey's and the like. The enduring smells of the Djemma's food stalls, piled high with platters of specialty cuisine, are well worth a visit just for the experience.

Overnight in Marrakech.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Marrakech: City Tour

Marrakech is one of the world's most enchanting cities. The city is situated on a lush palmerie and its history dates to the Almoravid Dynasty circa 1070. Founded by Youssef ibn Tachfin, the city became the dominant centre of Morocco and served as the capital of this powerful medieval empire that stretched across North Africa and into Spain.

Our exploration of Marrakech begins at the iconic Koutoubia Mosque (which you may have already glimpsed), its impressive minaret a landmark of the city. This 12th-century masterpiece, built during the Almohad period, stands as a testament to Morocco's rich Islamic architectural heritage. From here, we'll delve into the Mellah, the historic Jewish quarter, with its distinct atmosphere and architecture that tells the story of Morocco's diverse cultural heritage.

Our cultural immersion continues with a visit to the Museum of Moroccan Arts, Dar Si Said. Housed in a beautiful former palace dating from the late 19th century, this museum showcases the rich artistry and craftsmanship of Morocco, with exhibits featuring intricate woodwork, ceramics, textiles, and jewelry that span centuries of Moroccan creative tradition.

Next we'll explore the opulent Palais Bahia, a stunning 19th-century palace built during the Alaouite Dynasty and intended to be the greatest palace of its time. Wander through its intricate courtyards, admire the detailed tilework, and imagine the lives of the grand viziers and their families who once resided within its walls during Morocco's more recent royal history.

To conclude our guided exploration, we'll step into the serenity of the Majorelle Gardens. This tranquil oasis, with its striking blue architecture, exotic plants, and the fascinating Berber Museum, offers a peaceful escape from the city bustle. Created by French painter Jacques Majorelle in the 1920s and later restored by Yves Saint Laurent, you'll have time to wander through its calming pathways and admire its unique beauty.

The afternoon is then free for you to explore Marrakech further at your own pace. You might choose to revisit the vibrant souks for shopping, explore other gardens, visit a traditional hammam, or relax at a rooftop café and soak in the city's atmosphere while watching the Atlas Mountains in the distance.

Overnight in Marrakech.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Marrakech - Essaouira

Today we travel from the bustling inland city of Marrakech to the fortified, whitewashed fishing village of Essaouira. Once a pirate community, the town is located on a rock promontory overlooking the sometimes raging Atlantic Ocean. There was a small Phonenician settlement at Essaouira, previously called Magdoura or Mogador, a corruption of the Berber word 'Amegdul,' meaning ‘well-protected'. The Romans were interested in the purple dye produced from shellfish which they used to colour the robes of the rich.

Orson Welles stayed here for some time, filming part of Othello at the Skala. In the 1960s Essaouira had a brief reputation as a 'happening place', which attracted hippies, notably the rock star, Jimi Hendrix. Before dinner you may want to stroll along the beach and/or visit the colourful fish market.

Overnight in Essaouira.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Essaouira: Walking Tour

Essaouira is one of Morocco's most charming towns. Old Mogador was occupied in the 15th century by the Portuguese who built the fortifications around the harbour; these impressive ramparts still give the city a fortified look.

We begin our exploration of Essaouira with a visit to its bustling fishing harbour. The scene is a vibrant tapestry of activity, with an incredible array of fresh fish and seafood being auctioned, loaded, and delivered amidst the lively atmosphere of vendors, onlookers, and the ever-present seagulls. Don't miss a glimpse of the traditional shipyard.

Next, we'll wander through the narrow back streets along the ramparts to the Skala de la Ville (the city bastion). Perched along the northern cliffs, this offers magnificent panoramic views across the sea, the Medina, the Kasbah, and the old Jewish quarter (Mellah).

Continuing our exploration of the Medina, a UNESCO World Heritage site, we'll make our way towards the Grand Mosque and then to the vibrant Jewellers' Souk, and the aromatic Fish and Spice Souks. We'll also stroll through the historic Mellah, perhaps passing by the Lalla Mira Hammam, which has a cinematic connection. For those interested, a visit to the Haim Pinto Synagogue offers a glimpse into the town's Jewish heritage.

The afternoon is free for you to explore Essaouira at your own pace. You might choose to get further immersed in the Medina for exploring and shopping, or perhaps attend the daily Port Fish Auction for a second look.

Overnight in Essaouira.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Essaouira - Casablanca

After relatively leisurely morning, we'll leave behind the coastal ambiance of Essaouira and journey northwards along the scenic Atlantic coastline toward Casablanca. Along the way, we'll be treated to expansive views of the rugged cliffs meeting the ocean, perhaps glimpses of sandy beaches, and the ever-present Atlantic breeze.

Around the midpoint of our journey, we'll make a stop in Safi for a break and chance to get some lunch. Safi itself is a picturesque place known for its pottery.

As we travel onwards, the landscape will gradually transition from the windswept feel of the coast to increasing urban activity as we arrive back in Morocco's largest city in time for a bit of a break before our last evening meal together.

Overnight in Casablanca.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Departure

Departure from Casablanca.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast