

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Morocco Sahara Odyssey

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

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Jemaa el-Fna square, Marrakesh, Morocco

Morocco Sahara Odyssey

Small Group Adventure

Morocco: Rabat, Fez, Sahara Tented Camp, High Atlas Mountains, Ouarzazate, Marrakesh, Casablanca

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

16 days starting from \$4,795

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/mso2025pricing

Morocco entralls even the most experienced adventurer. Tradition infuses its labyrinthine *medinas*, overflowing with centuries-old customs and the colorful bounty of the Earth. Join us in Morocco and explore several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the *medinas* of Fez and Marrakesh. You'll also meet Moroccan people, experience their traditions, spend 2 nights in a private tented camp under the starry skies of the mighty Sahara Desert, and more.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation (13 nights if you are taking our optional post-trip extension to Essaouira & Casablanca)
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 33 meals—14 breakfasts, 9 lunches, and 10 dinners, including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner (31 meals—including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner—if you are taking our optional post-trip extension to Essaouira & Casablanca)
- All land transportation
- 15 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, camp staff, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Casablanca, Morocco
2-3	Rabat
4-6	Fez
7	Erfoud
8-9	Sahara Desert
10-11	Ouarzazate
12-14	Marrakesh
15	Casablanca
16	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 7 locations in 15 days with two 1-night stays

Physical requirements: Travel over cobbled streets and sandy, uneven, and bumpy terrain in the Sahara that can be challenging for travelers with leg or back issues; agility is also required to participate in the camel ride and to access some vehicles by ladder.

Flight Time: Travel time will be 7-22 hours and will most likely have one to two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/mso

MOROCCO: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Spend **A Day in the Life** of Asfalou village where a local family will share their daily routine and show us how to prepare a traditional meal. Plus, meet members of the Imik Simik Women’s Association for Rural Development—supported by **Grand Circle Foundation**—near Aït Benhaddou, where we’ll learn how these local women aim to improve their quality of life and foster independence in young women. You’ll also share a meal with a local family in Fez during a **Home-Hosted Dinner**.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Venture off the beaten path to spend **2 nights at a private tented camp** in the legendary Sahara Desert. Our camp is located close to a sand dune sea near Merzouga where few foreigners venture, along routes known only to the camel and goat-herding Tuareg nomads. We’ll also have candid conversations about **Controversial Topics** such as the challenges faced by young women in contemporary Moroccan society. By speaking to local people directly affected by these complex issues, we’ll gain a deeper understanding of day-to-day life in Morocco.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Northern Morocco:
Chefchaouen, Tangier & the
Berbers of the Rif

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,695**

The Atlantic Coast: Artistic
Essaouira & Casablanca

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,095**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Casablanca** before your Northern Morocco pre-trip extension from **\$220** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Rabat** before your main adventure from **\$220** per room, per night

Morocco Sahara Odyssey

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Northern Morocco: Chefchaouen, Tangier & the Berbers of the Rif*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Casablanca, Morocco •
Explore Casablanca

Day 3 Overland to Chefchaouen

Day 4 Moroccan cooking demonstration
• **Home-Hosted Lunch** • Explore
Chefchaouen

Day 5 Chefchaouen • Optional *Tetouan
Cultural Mix* tour

Day 6 Overland to Tangier

Day 7 Train ride to Rabat • Begin main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on an overnight flight to Casablanca, Morocco.

Day 2 Arrive in Casablanca, Morocco • Overland to Rabat

- Destination: Rabat
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Le Diwan Hotel or similar

Activity Note: During Ramadan, from March 1 to March 29, 2025, the general pacing is often slower throughout the daytime. Shops may open later in the afternoon and religious fasting may affect restaurant availability during breakfast and lunch hours. Local activity tends to return to its usual vibrancy following the daily sunset meal.

Morning: Depending on your specific flight arrangements, you'll arrive in Casablanca throughout the day. An O.A.T. representative

will greet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel in Rabat, one of Morocco's ancient imperial cities and its capital since 1913.

Lunch: Enjoy your first taste of Moroccan cuisine on your own—your Trip Experience Leader will recommend a local restaurant for you to try.

Afternoon: After checking in to our hotel and receiving your room assignments, your afternoon is free. Perhaps you'll explore the creative side of Morocco at the Villa des Arts. This site houses contemporary art that draws heavily on Moroccan heritage and focuses on themes centered around environmentalism, coexistence, and tolerance. Or, take a stroll through Rabat's Botanical Garden to witness over 650 species of plants, including rare varieties of tropical, sub-tropical, and succulents.

Later this afternoon, fellow travelers who took the optional pre-trip extension to *Morocco: Chefchaouen, Tangier & the Berbers of the Rif* will join the main adventure, along with travelers who arrived early in Rabat before their main adventure.

Dinner: Enjoy dinner together at our hotel's restaurant, featuring regional cuisine.

Evening: You are free to spend your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll retire to your room to rest after the long journey, or join travelers at the hotel to discuss your upcoming discoveries.

Day 3 Explore Rabat

- Destination: Rabat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Le Diwan Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, our Trip Experience Leader will give a Welcome Briefing. Afterwards, we will delve into the basics of the Arabic language.

Leaving the hotel behind us, we set out on an orientation tour by bus with our Trip Experience Leader to familiarize ourselves with the surrounding area. We will stop at a coffee shop to enjoy a traditional *nos-nos*—a half milk, half espresso drink. While here, we will interact with the locals and the waitstaff, perhaps even the shop owner, to learn about daily life and the history of coffee in the region. Following our visit, we will continue to explore the cobbled streets of Rabat, seeking out opportunities to interact with the locals we come across.

Next, we'll get off the bus and take a walk along the outside of the Royal Palace. Surrounded by a guarded enclosure, the present palace was built in 1864 over the ruins of an older royal palace. The architectural complex with large

gardens and interior courtyards houses the seat of government, and includes a mosque, guard barracks, and a royal college. We'll also stop by the Mohammed V Mausoleum, an architectural marvel that it is the final resting place of three members of the royal family.

This morning's discoveries conclude at the Kasbah Oudeya, a citadel originally built in the twelfth century. Many of the winding lanes are fringed with whitewashed homes intensely accented with a vibrant hue of blue. As we continue our exploration of the kasbah, we will make our way to the Andalusian gardens, which offer a shady retreat with its varying plant-life, such as oleanders, orange, lemon and banana trees. Perhaps we will take a step away from the bustle of the streets and enjoy the view of the Bou Regreg River.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: After returning to the hotel together, you'll enjoy free time to spend as you please.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring traditional Moroccan cuisine and a glass of wine.

Evening: On your own—you are free to return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the main hotel area to discuss the day's activities.

Day 4 Overland to Fez

- Destination: Fez
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Riad Salam

Activity Note: Today, our transfer from Rabat to Fez will involve a 4-hour bus ride (with stops along the way) over roads that may be bumpy or uneven at times. Fez's crowded, narrow *medinas* are a haven for pickpockets, and travelers should stay alert and be aware of

their belongings and surroundings at all times. If this day falls on a Thursday, we will instead visit the *medina* on Day 6 to experience it on the weekend when it is at its liveliest.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart the coast and Rabat this morning, and set off for Fez—locally referred to as *Fes*. We'll drive past sweeping fields, rolling countryside, and tree-covered slopes, some of which may be speckled with poppies, prickly pears, olive trees, or snow, depending on the time of year. We'll make a stop along the way in El Khemisset to stretch our legs and perhaps get a cup of coffee at a coffee shop there.

Upon arrival in Fez, we'll leave our bus behind in the modern city and enter the *medina*—or old city—on foot. As we enter, let the colors and sounds of boisterous Fez envelope you. Vendors fill market stalls with colorful handcrafted goods, and on either side of us, donkey carts and motorbikes zip past as we carefully traverse the narrow, maze-like lanes of the ancient walled city. But, as we approach our *riad*, you'll never believe the peaceful haven awaiting us on the other side of the door. A *riad* is a Moroccan home that has been refurbished into a guest house. With just around 20 rooms, our small group size lends itself perfectly to the intimacy and authenticity of a *riad* stay, and we'll get a true sense of local life as we share this traditional living space for the next three nights. A typical *riad* features intricate handmade tilework, and is multiple stories high, with rooms—each possessing their own distinct character—connected by a hallway that overlooks an open-air courtyard. Most *riads* don't feature elevators, and with their open layouts, it's not uncommon for the sounds of the city outside to make their way in to our living space.

Upon arrival, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a brief orientation walk around the vicinity of the *riad* and point out places you can go in your free time.

Lunch: Traditional hot and cold dishes served at our *riad* upon arrival.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll check into our *riad*. You will have the remainder of your afternoon to relax more at the *riad* or perhaps explore more of Fez.

Dinner: On your own tonight. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you with other recommendations.

Evening: The evening is free to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll retire to your room or enjoy a drink with fellow travelers.

Day 5 Explore Fez • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Fez
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Riad Salam or similar

Activity Note: If this day falls on a Friday, the optional tour from Day 6 will be featured instead and the *medina* visit will be on Saturday.

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: We'll enjoy a full day of exploration in Fez, beginning with a stroll through the *medina* with a local guide. The *medina* is often considered the world's most well-preserved medieval city, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We start by exploring the traditional Jewish quarter, called the *mellah*.

Then we'll enter the *souks* (markets). This ancient section of Fez is a maze of narrow streets, and one of the largest car-free urban areas in the world. The benefit of being in the company of your Trip Experience Leader will become instantly clear, as navigating the

winding *medina* is a code only a true local can crack. Every inch of space is filled with bazaars, cafés, shops, donkeys, and people. As you stroll the narrow lanes, age-old urban tradition will be on vibrant display, and the intensity of daily life will be bursting around every corner.

Lunch: At an old Moroccan home that has been converted into a local restaurant, situated in the heart of the old *medina*.

Afternoon: After lunch, we continue exploring the *medina* as we hear the calls of the vendors selling their wares, watch artisans maintain their stalls, listen to shoppers haggle, and browse for gifts to take home.

We'll return to our *riad* in the mid-afternoon and enjoy time to relax prior to dinner.

Dinner: We'll break into even smaller groups this evening to enjoy a true taste of Moroccan life during a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. The family you spend the evening with may live inside the old walls of the *medina*, or outside the historic center in what is referred to as the "New City." They may have school-aged children or be retirees. But all families will live in a private apartment and provide a welcoming and congenial atmosphere.

Expect to dine on typical Moroccan dishes such as *harira*, a popular soup made up tomatoes, chickpeas, and lentils; *tagine*, a lamb dish prepared with apricots and seasonal vegetables; and Moroccan salads. For the families we visit, this is a great chance to practice their limited English. And for us, this is a unique opportunity to learn even more about daily life in this city as you personally connect with the family and ask your hosts about family dynamics, cultural norms, professions, and more. You might, for example, learn about Moroccan wedding traditions and have the chance to view a

family's wedding day attire. Or perhaps you will learn more about the challenges of running a small business in Morocco.

Whatever the topic of your dinner-table discussion, your evening will be one to remember. You might like to share with your hosts your recent discoveries along the way, or even some small gifts from your local town.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries after we return to our *riad*. You can take some time for yourself, explore the surrounding area, or meet up with fellow travelers to discuss the day.

Day 6 Fez • Optional Volubilis & Meknes tour

- Destination: Fez
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Riad Salam or similar

Activity Note: If Day 5 falls on a Friday, today's optional tour to Volubilis and Meknes will be featured instead. Today's activities will be replaced with a visit to a local *medina*.

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: The morning is yours to make your own discoveries in Fez. You may choose to take a walk through La Ville Nouvelle, an area whose French influence, and modern look and feel, offer a fascinating contrast to the traditional styles throughout most of Fez. Or, if flora is your forte, maybe you'll choose to visit the botanical garden.

Or, you may join a full-day optional tour of two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Volubilis and Meknes. Our tour begins in Volubilis, one of the most well-preserved Roman cities in North Africa. Led by a local guide, we'll wander amongst its historic ruins and colorful mosaics, and our guide will help us envision what life was like in ancient times. From this

vantage point, we'll have panoramic views of the whitewashed, holy city of Moulay Idriss in the distance. Then we'll set off for Meknes, one-time home of the Moroccan sultanate.

Lunch: On your own and your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations. If you have joined our optional tour, you will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant in Meknes upon arrival.

Afternoon: Travelers not on the optional tour will continue to enjoy free time and independent explorations early this afternoon. If you are on the optional tour, we will continue our explorations with a tour of the Old City in Meknes after lunch. Here, we'll visit local monuments and historic sites with our Trip Experience Leader.

After returning to Fez late this afternoon, you may enjoy the amenities of your *riad*, relax, or make your own discoveries.

Dinner: At the *riad*.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations if you'd like to experience this city at night.

Day 7 Cross the Middle & High Atlas Mountains • Overland to Erfoud

- Destination: Erfoud
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Kasbah Hotel Chergui or similar

Activity Note: Today our transfer from Fez to Erfoud will involve a long bus ride, covering approximately 300 miles through the Middle and High Atlas Mountain range, over roads that may be bumpy, uneven, steep, and winding. Our total transfer time is up to 9 hours, especially

in winter when road closures may lead to unexpected detours. We will break up the long transfer with stops along the way.

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: Our experience in the Sahara begins today when we board our bus to drive across the Middle Atlas mountain range, winding through pine groves and giant cedar forests. The rich purple soil and the tall evergreens are quite a contrast against each other. We cross a 6,000-foot pass in the mountains and head further toward the Sahara. This long transfer will give our small group ample opportunity to witness the varied geologic and ecological zones we travel through and gain a deeper understanding of the regional landscapes.

We'll make several stops along the way, beginning with the quaint, ski resort town of Ifrane, where we'll have time to take pictures. Later, we'll also visit a semi-nomadic family (when possible, based on their availability). While here, we will enter into their tent and enjoy a cup of tea while discussing the nomadic way of life. Our small group affords us the unique opportunity to ask this family questions and understand their daily life. Following our visit, we will board our bus and continue our drive through thick cedar forests. Perhaps, you will spot the barbary macaque, a rare monkey species.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Midelt, featuring typical dishes of the area. This village converted old mining grounds to fish farms, and is now famous for their trout farming.

Afternoon: We continue our drive through the High Atlas Mountains, and in the late afternoon, we descend into Erfoud, a small trading village that is the gateway to the vast Sahara Desert.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Your evening is free to enjoy a night cap with fellow travelers at the hotel bar or rest before tomorrow's journey into the Sahara Desert.

**Day 8 Off-road Sahara adventure •
Overland to Sahara Desert camp • Meet
local family**

- Destination: Sahara Desert
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Private tented camp

Activity Note: We will board 4x4 vehicles to make our way into the Sahara Desert over sand dunes.

In addition, travelers on our departures in mid-April through May and August through mid-September will spend an additional night at the hotel in Erfoud tonight, instead of in our tented camp, due to the Sahara's summer heat. Travelers on these departures will continue to spend one night in the tented camp, on Day 9.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin our day boarding 4x4 vehicles and driving to the village of Rissani. Here, we enjoy an O.A.T.-exclusive visit with members of a local desert community in their home to experience a traditional side of Moroccan life. Our Trip Experience Leader will help us communicate with the local family, and we encourage travelers to interact, ask questions, and learn more about this way of life. Afterwards, we board our 4x4 vehicles and head into the desert to continue our journey to our private tented campsite, located close to a sea of sand dunes near Merzouga. During our 2-night stay, we'll experience the remote environment of the Sahara, with no roads, and the sound of the wind in the dunes as we navigate the sandy tracks.

At the camp, you'll stay in a walk-in canvas tent, complete with camp bed, mattress, fresh linens, and pillow, and private en suite toilet facilities. There is a separate tent for dining.

Lunch: At the camp.

Afternoon: Enjoy free time to discover more of the desert. Perhaps you'd like to go back out in a 4x4 vehicle, or trek over the sand dunes where you can enjoy the dramatic views of the sun setting low over the desert stretching out around you.

Late this afternoon, our local cook will give us a demonstration in preparing Moroccan cuisine. The chef will choose the menu, likely featuring local staples such as fish *cherroula*, a well-marinated white fish grilled over coals, along with other savory discoveries such as *harissa*, a fiery sauce made from hot red pepper, olive oil, and garlic; or *tagine*, a slow-cooked stew named for the pot that it's cooked in.

Dinner: At the camp.

Evening: The evening is free for you to enjoy the starry desert sky, spend time reflecting with fellow travelers, or rest.

**Day 9 Sahara Desert walk • Farm visit •
Meet nomadic families in Khamlia**

- Destination: Sahara Desert
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Private tented camp

Early morning: If you wish, your Trip Experience Leader will wake you up early to sit in the camp and watch the sunrise over the Sahara Desert, casting a golden light across the sprawling sand dunes. During the summer, the sun rises around 5am, but in the winter, it rises closer to 6am. Your Trip Experience Leader will then guide you on a short walk close to camp.

Breakfast: In the dining tent.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll "saddle up" to explore the desert dunes the traditional way—on the back of a camel (weather permitting). Then, our 4x4 vehicle takes us to a local farm for an exclusive visit to learn about local produce and vegetation in the Sahara's unique climate.

Once our visit wraps up, we'll head to Khamlia, a remote desert village. This region is renowned for the ritual songs of its Gnawa musicians, and we'll get the chance to hear their melodic chants during a lively performance. Next, we'll get another perspective on life in the furthest corners of the Sahara at a nomadic village, an experience exclusive to O.A.T. travelers. During our visit, we'll talk to the women of these families over a cup of tea to learn about their nomadic lifestyle and how they cook, maintain their home, educate their children, and more. We'll return to our camp in time for lunch.

Lunch: In the dining tent.

Afternoon: You will have about several hours of free time this afternoon to spend as you wish. Perhaps you'll hike the dunes or venture by 4x4 vehicle around the desert. Prior to dinner, we'll reconvene at the campsite for an in-depth conversation with your Trip Experience Leader about the basic tenets of Islam. Based around the five main pillars of the religion—faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca—our conversation will illuminate the realities, misconceptions, and history behind the Islamic faith. During this interactive Q&A session, we encourage travelers to ask challenging questions. This is a great opportunity to gain a better understanding of religion, family dynamics, gender roles, and to dig deeper into Islam's portrayal in the U.S. media compared to the reality of its practice in Morocco.

Dinner: In the dining tent.

Evening: We'll spend our last night gazing at the starry desert sky, where (weather permitting) the Milky Way may be clear and bright, and perhaps enjoying music and dancing with the camp staff.

Day 10 Overland to Ouarzazate • Visit Berber museum

- Destination: Ouarzazate
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Dar Kamar or similar

Activity Note: Our overland transfer to Ouarzazate will take about eight hours, including stops along the way.

Breakfast: In the dining tent.

Morning: This morning, we leave the open desert behind and set off for the oasis town of Ouarzazate in our 4x4 vehicles. Including stops along the way, the entire transfer will take about 8 hours. En route, we might stop to learn about *khatarat*, an old underground water system, then continue on our way to Tinejdad. Upon arrival, we'll take a walk inside the ancient fortified *ksar* (a Berber walled city typically used to keep desert raiders out of Roman cities on the coast). Next, we'll visit a Berber museum founded by a local Jewish activist, where we'll learn about the history, architecture, and daily life of Berbers in this region.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll continue via coach for another 4 hours to Ouarzazate, a city built by the French as a garrison outpost in the Sahara. Upon arrival, we'll check in to our hotel or *riad*.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: The evening is free to explore on your own, take advantage of the hotel amenities, or rest in your room.

Day 11 *A Day in the Life* of Asfalou village
• Visit **Grand Circle Foundation** site: Imik Simik Women's Association • Explore Ouarzazate

- Destination: Ouarzazate
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Dar Kamar or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we visit Asfalou village, a mountainside town. We'll first stop at a coffee shop in the nearby town of Aït Benhaddou, where we'll pick up a local guide who will help facilitate our conversations in Asfalou, and to stretch our legs before continuing our drive.

We'll then arrive at Asfalou, where we will have the opportunity to experience ***A Day in the Life*** of several aspects of the community, beginning with meeting a local family. We'll greet our hosts in their home to get a firsthand look at a typical family's lifestyle in this region. Our host is a bricklayer, while his wife and children help out with farm work in the outlying fields, and can share their perspective of everyday life as a Berber in rural Morocco.

After a short walk around the fields, we'll head back inside their home for some light refreshment. We'll sip tea, then enjoy a light snack of bread and olive oil as we converse about life in the village. We'll learn about the challenges of carving out an agrarian living in this arid region of Morocco, and about how the close proximity of Aït Benhaddou—a UNESCO World Heritage Site where major Hollywood productions are regularly filmed—affects their lives and the local economy.

Then, we'll roll up our sleeves and help out with some village chores to gain a hands-on understanding of the day-to-day tasks that occupy the lives of the locals. Our host will point us in the direction of the work that needs to be done; you might help him craft bricks, or join his wife and daughters in the fields, where you'll tend to the crops and help feed the animals. Some will help prepare the afternoon's meal in the kitchen, which we'll then share together.

Lunch: We'll sit down together at the family table for lunch. Our hosts will choose the menu, but it will likely feature regional specialties such as *couscous* or pastries, prepared from farm-fresh ingredients grown locally on the premises. We'll spend about an hour dining together, offering more opportunities for intimate conversation about what life is like for Berbers in modern-day Morocco.

Afternoon: After bidding farewell to our hosts, we'll drive to the **Grand Circle Foundation**—sponsored Imik Simik Women's Association for Rural Development, an O.A.T.-exclusive site.

Grand Circle Foundation

Imik Simik Women's Association for Rural Development

Total donated: **\$65,668**

Partner since: **2016**

The association was established in 2012 by just 15 women and has since grown to include 43 women, each hoping to further their education and opportunities. Located just outside the village of Aït Benhaddou, in a predominantly male-dominated area, the association's goal is to create workshops and programs that teach girls and women how to sew, read, cook, develop healthcare and other skills and crafts that otherwise would not be available. The

Imik Simik Women's Association currently generates funding by selling bread, pastries, and *couscous* to local guesthouses in the village.

When we arrive, we'll meet with Fatima, the association's leader, and receive a tour of the facilities. We'll also meet the many women who work and learn here, and find out how they are trying to change their lives and those of the young women in their community, for the better. The association has faced hardship and obstacles owing to its location in a close-minded community, but as we'll learn, the women's persistence and determination has paid off—in 2018, after two years of negotiation with local leaders, the association won land rights and planning permission to build a new women's center. Grand Circle Foundation was thrilled to provide funds for this project and construction has been completed for the new center and the women of Imik Simik were able to move into the new building at the end of 2021.

We'll spend a little more than an hour speaking with these women and learning more about their lives during a Q&A session complete with mint tea and cookies. Some of the women may be learning English, but your Trip Experience Leader will play a large role in translating and facilitating the conversation.

After enjoying a tea ceremony with the women, we'll experience a henna ceremony in which traditional, natural dye is used to give you an intricate and non-permanent tattoo.

We'll return to our hotel in the mid-afternoon, and you are free to explore on our own. You may choose to stroll through Ouarzazate's main square, sit down at one of the nearby cafés, or meander through the local flea market. We will re-convene later to walk to dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The evening is free to explore on your own after we return to the hotel. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide recommendations for the best ways to experience this city at night.

Day 12 Cross High Atlas Mountains

• Overland to Marrakesh • Explore Djemaa El Fna

- Destination: Marrakesh
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Riad Palais des Princesses or similar

Activity Note: Our overland transfer today brings us to the highest altitude of the whole trip: more than 7,000 feet. It involves a 5-hour bus ride over roads that are steep and winding with stops included along the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We travel through the High Atlas Mountains today en route to Marrakesh. During the drive of about five hours, we'll pause high above narrow green valleys to take in sweeping views. On our journey, we'll pass by Tizi N'Tichka road, a dramatic, winding road through the peaks and valleys of the High Atlas Mountains. The road, at times, can appear carved into the mountainside.

Upon our arrival in Marrakesh, we'll head to our *riad*.

Lunch: At our *riad*.

Afternoon: We check into our *riad* after lunch and will enjoy time at leisure, followed by a short orientation walk. Then we'll walk to Djemaa El Fna, Marrakesh's central square. Translating to "assembly of the dead"—in commemoration of public executions that occurred there in 1050 AD—Djemaa El Fna has taken on somewhat of a paradoxical nature, having blossomed into an area that is as full of

life as the Sahara is full of sand. A cacophony of sounds fills the streets as musicians tune their instruments; snake charmers dazzle with their fascinating mix of danger and exotic ritual; food stalls line the streets; and a combination of horse-drawn carriages, motorbikes, and cars are relegated to the outskirts of the square as nightly pedestrian traffic takes center stage. This is a distinct locale for people-watching, and a great place to sample some local cuisine. You'll have free time to explore the area on your own.

Dinner: Your Trip Experience Leader will lead you to their favorite food stalls so you can sample local favorites on your own.

Evening: Enjoy the freedom to explore on your own this evening or spend a night in to refresh before your days in Marrakesh.

Day 13 Explore Marrakesh • Horse-drawn *calèche* ride

- Destination: Marrakesh
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Riad Palais des Princesses or similar

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: Our day begins with a walking tour of the legendary city of Marrakesh, led by our expert Trip Experience Leader. First we'll stop by the opulent Bahia Palace. This 19th-century palace houses 150 council rooms with large fireplaces and intricately painted cedar work lining the floor and walls. The open air Court of Honor is lined with vibrant tiles and flowing fountains.

Our tour continues at Le Jardin Secret, an opulent 400-year-old palatial estate featuring opulent architecture and immaculately-tended gardens. In ages past, the estate entertained

Morocco's most elite and influential political figures—today, you can wander the grounds and admire their beauty for yourself.

Next, we'll visit the Koutoubia minaret, which houses the largest mosque in Marrakesh with its minaret standing at 70 meters—the tallest structure in the city. In fact, local laws forbid any new structures from exceeding the height of the minaret. We'll also explore the famous *medina* of Marrakesh, one of the ancient crossroads of North Africa and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our final stop is at a local bakery, where we'll have the chance to meet with the baker and learn about his traditional bread-making techniques.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some of their favorite options.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll return to our hotel as a group. You'll have some free time to explore independently, or join your Trip Experience Leader for an elective visit to see a demonstration of Berber weaving. As we watch and learn, your local Trip Experience Leader will explain the significance of the tradition as it relates to local history and culture, adding color to the experience.

Afterwards, our Trip Experience Leader will lead our group on a deeper exploration of Marrakesh, but in a traditional horse-drawn *calèche*. As we cruise along the streets and narrow lanes, enjoy the sunset and bustling city squares.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: After dinner, tonight is yours to explore Marrakesh and enjoy the city by night. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations of nighttime activities in the area.

Day 14 Marrakesh • Controversial Topic:
Young Moroccan women balancing
personal choices with societal norms •
Optional tours

- Destination: Marrakesh
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Riad Palais des Princesses or similar

Early Morning: Early risers are welcome to join our optional Marrakesh Hot-Air Balloon Ride this morning. Prior to sunrise, we'll transfer to the balloon site, which is about a 45-minute drive. There we'll receive a safety briefing from our pilot, and then we'll watch an expert team inflate and prepare our balloon. Afterwards, we'll ascend into the morning sky, which offers a unique perspective of Morocco. The adventure will last about an hour, depending on weather conditions. We may be able to see traditional Berber villages or far-off palm groves dotting the desert landscape.

Breakfast: For those taking the optional tour, breakfast will be served following your balloon ride at the balloon site. For those not taking the optional tour, breakfast will be served at the *riad*.

Morning: Following breakfast or your optional tour, the day is yours for independent discoveries. As in Fez, there is much to see, do, and buy in the bustling *medina*, and your Trip Experience Leader will be able to offer you plenty of suggestions about where to go.

Or, you can choose to join our optional Marrakesh Museums tour, which features visits to the *Jardin de Majorelle* and Islamic Art Museum; the Museum of the Water Civilization; and a stroll through Marrakesh's ancient *medina*.

Lunch: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for their local favorites. If you joined the optional tour, you'll join some local Moroccans

for a roasted lamb lunch in a local restaurant. There will be vegetarian options available for those who do not eat lamb.

Afternoon: Later this afternoon, we'll re-convene as a group to meet with one of two young women at our *riad* for a conversation about a **Controversial Topic**—the ongoing struggles faced by women seeking gender equality in contemporary Moroccan society. The woman we speak to will share her personal stories about how her choices have affected her life both at home and in broader Moroccan society.

With no formal right to free speech or separation between church and state, Morocco's young women are torn between the competing pressures to pursue their dreams and to meet the traditional expectations of their family and faith. The woman we meet with today might have grown up "behind the veil" in a more conservative family, or she may have parents who valued education and encouraged her to pursue her dreams. She may be secular or devoutly religious. While these two young women may be from different backgrounds, they are united in a common goal: Creating a future for Morocco in which women are free to pursue their hopes and dreams.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Your evening is yours to enjoy a final night in Marrakesh, making final visits to the *medina* or reminiscing about the trip with your fellow travelers over a nightcap.

Day 15 Marrakesh • Overland to Casablanca • Visit the Hassan II Mosque

- Destination: Casablanca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Casablanca or similar

Activity Note: Travelers taking our post-trip extension to *The Atlantic Coast: Artistic Essaouira & Casablanca* will depart for Essaouira on Day 15 after breakfast. All other travelers will continue to Casablanca on a 3- to 4-hour bus ride over roads that may be bumpy or uneven. During our visit to the mosque, both men and women with exposed legs and upper arms will need to cover them. You will also need to remove your shoes while visiting the mosque.

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: Those of us who will be returning to the U.S. after the main trip concludes will check out of our *riad* and depart for Casablanca. During our 3- to 4-hour drive, we'll enjoy another look at Morocco's timeless landscapes.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Casablanca.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll witness the towering Hassan II Mosque. This mosque is the largest in Morocco, with a striking minaret,

eye-catching marble columns, an intricately designed dome, and mosaic tiles. While here, you may even hear the call to prayer emanating from the towering minaret. Following our visit to the mosque, we'll make our way to our hotel and check in.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide suggestions on where to dine.

Evening: Tonight is free to explore Casablanca, gather with fellow travelers in the hotel lobby for one last drink to toast to the discoveries you've made together, or retire early before your morning flight.

Day 16 Casablanca • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity Note: Many travelers will have a very early wake-up call to catch flights home to the U.S. Travelers who may have arranged later flights may discuss alternate plans with your Trip Experience Leader.

Breakfast: A light breakfast will be served at the hotel.

Early morning: Drive to the airport for your return flight home.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *The Atlantic Coast: Artistic Essaouira & Casablanca*

Day 1 Overland to Essaouira

Day 2 Explore Essaouira

Day 3 Essaouira • Optional Hidden Gems of Mogador tour

Day 4 Overland to Casablanca • Visit oyster farm

Day 5 Explore Casablanca • Hassan II Mosque

Day 6 Casablanca • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Volubilis & Meknes

(Day 6 \$100 per person)

On this full-day optional excursion, we'll explore two eye-opening, ancient sites.

First we'll pass through the rolling countryside until we arrive at Volubilis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; it's one of the best-preserved Roman cities in North Africa. Led by a local guide, we'll wander amongst its historic ruins, where—peppered within the fragments of stone from ancient dwellings—we'll behold a variety of striking, well-preserved mosaics, and our guide can help us envision what life was like in ancient times. From this vantage point, we'll also be able to look out upon the panoramic, whitewashed vistas of the holy city of Moulay Idriss in the distance.

Then we'll set off for Meknes, onetime home of the Moroccan sultanate and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After passing through the monumental gates of this walled city, we'll stop for lunch at a local restaurant.

Please note: *If Day 5 falls on a Friday, today's optional tour to Volubilis and Meknes will be featured instead. Today's activities will be replaced with a visit to a local medina.*

Marrakesh Hot Air Balloon Ride

(Day 14 \$215 per person)

After driving about 45 minutes outside the city to our balloon site, we'll receive a safety briefing from our pilot and watch an expert team inflate and prepare our balloon. Afterwards, we'll ascend into the morning sky on a 1-hour hot-air balloon ride, (duration dependent on weather conditions) which offers a unique perspective of Morocco. We'll witness the early dawn light illuminating the city and the Atlas Mountains. We may be able to see the traditional Berber villages or far-off palm groves dotting the desert landscape. A traditional Moroccan breakfast will be served at the balloon site.

Marrakesh Museums

(Day 14 \$75 per person)

Begin your day surrounded by flowers and art at the *Jardin Majorelle* and Islamic Art Museum. The lovely landscaped gardens were designed by French artist Jacques Majorelle in the 1920s (and once owned by Yves Saint-Laurent) and feature a variety of exotic plants, flowers, and cacti. The museum's collections include

North African textiles, ceramics, jewelry, and paintings by Majorelle. Then we visit the Museum of the Water Civilization, which documents the ingenious engineering solutions that Moroccans have employed over the years to provide clean water for their daily needs. Then we journey behind the eleventh-century ramparts to explore the narrow streets of Marrakesh's old fortified city, the *medina*, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your optional tour concludes with a lunch with some Moroccans, who will share the secret of their special local treat—slow roasted leg of lamb.

PRE-TRIP

Northern Morocco: Chefchaouen, Tangier & the Berbers of the Rif

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 9 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- » 4 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Venture to the mountainside city of Chefchaouen to witness its striking scenery and meet the Berbers who dwell amidst the Rif's 6,000 peaks. Then travel to Tangier on the northern coast to discover a city that has sparked unforgettable Morocco travel moments for centuries—and experience the intoxicating mix of cultures that travelers have left behind throughout the years.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on an overnight flight to Casablanca, Morocco.

Day 2 Arrive Casablanca, Morocco • Explore Casablanca

- Destination: Casablanca
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Casablanca or similar

Activity Note: If travelers arrive later today, the Welcome Briefing will be rescheduled for Day 3.

Morning: Arrive in Casablanca. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel in the heart of Casablanca. Here, you'll meet travelers who arrived early in Casablanca before the pre-trip extension. Pending your arrival time,

you may choose to join your Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk later this morning.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll try a restaurant your Trip Experience Leader pointed out during the orientation walk, or seek out fish *cherroula*—a seafood dish seasoned with a special mix of spices like onion, coriander, chilies, or saffron.

Afternoon: After enjoying some free time to explore this afternoon, we'll gather for a Welcome Briefing.

Dinner: On your own this evening. You may enjoy Mediterranean and international cuisine at the hotel restaurant or venture into the city for a local specialty.

Evening: You're free to explore Casablanca by night, enjoy a cocktail with fellow travelers at the hotel bar, or retire early to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 3 Overland to Chefchaouen

- Destination: Chefchaouen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Casa Hassan Guesthouse or similar

Activity Note: Our overland transfer today will take about 6.5 hours, with a stop for lunch on the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart for the city of Chefchaouen this morning. Known for its distinctive blue-washed buildings, Chefchaouen is nestled in the foothills of the Rif Mountains. Its name comes from a Berber phrase that means "watch the horns," a reference to the Jebel Tisouka and Megou mountains that rise dramatically above the city like a pair of horns.

Lunch: At a local restaurant en route, featuring barbeque dishes. While here, we will meet with the owner to learn more about daily life and their journey of moving from the south of the country.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to the "Blue City" later this afternoon. Shortly after our arrival, our Trip Experience Leader will lead an orientation walk to introduce us to this vibrant city. During our walk, we'll step into the lives of locals at a coffee shop in the main square: Place Outa el Hammam. We'll enjoy a cup of coffee and our Trip Experience Leader will then lead a conversation about the smoking habits of this conservative society.

Dinner: At our *riad*, featuring traditional Moroccan dishes like *tagine*, *couscous*, and grilled meats.

Evening: Tonight you are free to explore at your own pace, browsing the local shops, enjoying tea in a café, or taking in the Moroccan charm of our *riad*.

Day 4 Moroccan cooking demonstration

• Home-Hosted Lunch • Explore Chefchaouen

- Destination: Chefchaouen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Casa Hassan Guesthouse or similar

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: We'll head to Houmar, where we'll meet with a rural family for a hands-on cooking demonstration. Along the way, we'll enjoy the striking scenery of towering mountains and dense pine forests. Upon arrival, our hosts will tell us about farming in Northern Morocco as we select our ingredients from their garden and later join them in the kitchen to prepare a regional, seasonal specialty. Perhaps we'll make *harira*, a traditional soup served during the month of Ramadan, or *tagine*, a slow-cooked savory stew. Regardless of the dish, we'll have the unique opportunity to observe age-old culinary techniques and try our own hand at crafting these traditional recipes with fresh, local ingredients.

Lunch: We'll savor the fruits of our labor during a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with our gracious hosts.

Afternoon: Upon our return to Chefchaouen, enjoy free time to explore. Later, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a brief walking tour of the *medina*—a feast for all of our senses, with its lively vendors, sumptuous scents, and distinctive blue-washed buildings.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation during the walking tour, or discover somewhere new to try.

Evening: Head out on your own to take in Chefchaouen by night. Perhaps you'll sit longer at dinner to enjoy the atmosphere, walk the *medina* to shop, or gather in the *riad*'s courtyard with fellow travelers.

Day 5 Chefchaouen • Optional Tetouan Cultural Mix tour

- Destination: Chefchaouen
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Casa Hassan Guesthouse or similar

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: Enjoy a free day, and discover Chefchaouen's hidden corners, bustling markets, and mountain views as you walk its charming cobbled streets on your own. Perhaps you'll view its beautiful Great Mosque or the gardens of the *kasbah*, journey downhill to explore the new city, or ascend for a brief hike on the mountainside.

Or, you may choose to join our *Tetouan Cultural Mix* optional tour led by your expert Trip Experience Leader. Travelers who join will explore the historic *medina* of Tetouan, including a stop at the Royal Palace (which the royal family still inhabits). We'll also explore a lively marketplace, then visit an artisan school where craftsman and their apprentices make traditional artwork like ornamental woodwork, silk clothing, carved plaster, and mosaics.

Lunch: If you joined the optional tour in Tetouan, we'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant by the seaside. Otherwise, experience some of the local specialties on your own in Chefchaouen.

Afternoon: Travelers on the optional tour return to Chefchaouen, and the rest of the day is free to explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own—ask for a recommendation, or try a local restaurant you came across during your free afternoon.

Evening: Enjoy your last night in the “Blue City” as you choose. Perhaps you'll walk through the new city, return to the *medina*, or find a spot to simply sit and take in the spirit of the city.

Day 6 Overland to Tangier

- Destination: Tangier
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palais Zahia Hotel & Spa or similar

Activity Note: Our overland transfer today will take about 4 hours over roads that may be winding, bumpy, or uneven.

Breakfast: At the *riad*.

Morning: We'll travel along a scenic, coastal road to Tangier, whose beautiful light and multicultural spirit have drawn travelers to Morocco for centuries. People have been living in Tangier since colonists from Carthage settled there in the fifth century BC, and over the years it has traded hands between several kingdoms and empires, as well as served as a refuge for countless cultures.

Lunch: On your own upon arrival. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide some recommendations.

Afternoon: We'll experience the lively modern culture of this ancient coastal city during a guided tour led by our Trip Experience Leader. Our tour includes landmarks such as the bustling *medina*, historic *kasbah* (citadel), and

Cape Spartel, a scenic promontory looking out over the sea. Later, we'll check in to our *riad* and enjoy free time before dinner.

Dinner: At the *riad*.

Evening: Enjoy the evening free to wander through this port city, taking in its architecture, winding streets, and local shops.

Day 7 Train ride to Rabat • Begin main trip

- Destination: Rabat
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll venture out for a stroll with our Trip Experience Leader through Tangier's *medina*, taking time to appreciate its eclectic mix of ancient architecture and modern touches. As we explore the meandering maze of *medina* lanes, a helpful tip to keep in mind is that, when in doubt, walking uphill (in pretty much any direction) will usually lead you to an exit.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: We'll head to the train station to catch a train to Rabat. Upon arrival, we'll transfer to our hotel, where we'll meet our fellow travelers and begin our *Morocco Sahara Odyssey*.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Tetouan Cultural Mix

(Day 5 \$80 per person)

Immerse yourself in Tetouan's rich mix of cultures and traditions—Roman, Andalusian, European—and discover why the well-preserved city is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Founded in the 15th century by Andalusian refugees, this labyrinth of squares, *souks* (markets), and beaches still maintains its old-world charm. We'll have the chance to appreciate the city's extravagant architecture on a walking tour, including a visit to the Royal Palace—which is still inhabited by the royal family. Then, we'll witness the fusion of cultures that so defines the area on a visit to a bustling local market, where you'll see vendors selling handmade carpets, jewelry, and leather, and savor the aroma of delectable local dishes wafting from food carts. We'll also spend some time observing the craftsmanship of local artisans, including weaving, embroidery, metalworking, and woodcarving. Our tour concludes with lunch by the seaside.

POST-TRIP

The Atlantic Coast: Artistic Essaouira & Casablanca

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 9 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 1 dinner
- » 1 small group activity
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Known as “the pearl of the kingdom,” Essaouira boasts an exceptionally temperate climate, beautiful whitewashed neighborhoods, ornate architecture, a splendid medina, and a host of artisans’ workshops and colorful markets. Much of Essaouira’s magic comes from its artistic influence—inspired by the city’s tranquility, beauty, and splendid light.

Day 1 Overland to Essaouira

- Destination: Essaouira
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Atlas Essaouira or similar

Activity Note: After enjoying breakfast in Marrakesh on Day 15 of the main trip, we travel overland to Essaouira, and our Casablanca discoveries will take place on Day 5 of the post-trip extension. The transfer today will take about 3.5 hours, including stops along the way.

Morning: We’ll drive from Marrakesh to Essaouira, which extends from the massive historic fortifications of the old city to a long beach on the shoreline. Offshore in the distance lies Mogador, also known as the Îles Purpuraires (Purple Islands). The ancient Romans who occupied this area used the

island’s resources for creating a dye that colored their togas purple, thus giving the islands their name.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Essaouira.

Afternoon: We’ll continue driving to Essaouira and check in to our hotel upon arrival.

Dinner: At a local restaurant, where we’ll enjoy Moroccan and Mediterranean cuisine with our fellow travelers.

Evening: The evening is free for you to explore the city, spend time reflecting with fellow travelers, or rest.

Day 2 Explore Essaouira

- Destination: Essaouira
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Atlas Essaouira or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll embark on a guided tour of Essaouira led by our Trip Experience Leader. Our first stop is the main gate of the city's *medina*—a UNESCO World Heritage Site full of white-washed houses with cheerily painted blue doors. Here, we'll walk along its narrow lanes, artisans' workshops, and bustling fishing harbor—perhaps catching the pungent scent of freshly caught sardines grilling in the open air and glimpsing dormant cannons standing guard over the fishing fleets on the wharf. As we tour the harbor, our Trip Experience Leader will introduce us to some of the hardy fishermen who ply their trade here, enjoying opportunities for people-to-people interactions, as well as an authentic glimpse into the daily lives of locals.

Later this morning, we'll shop for fish at a local market, which we'll enjoy for lunch. Our Trip Experience Leader will help us navigate the market and shop like the locals do, giving us firsthand insight into how the people of this seaside city spend their days.

Next, we'll stroll through winding, narrow alleyways that make up the city center and watch as craftsmen carve ornate trinkets and boxes of lemonwood, briarwood, and mother of pearl inlay. Essaouira, once home to a large Jewish community, still has façades with the Star of David carved into them. We'll also visit a series of commanding forts built along the seafront that are a mixture of Portuguese, French, and Berber military architecture. Following our discoveries, we'll walk to a local restaurant to prepare the fish we bought for lunch.

Lunch: We'll enjoy fish we purchased at a local restaurant in the *medina*.

Afternoon: We'll continue our discoveries of Essaouira on foot as we learn about the melodic chants of Gnawa music and the handcrafted goods made from the Thuya tree,

a rare hardwood with a delicious fragrance that can only be found in this part of Morocco. The rest of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries.

Dinner: On our own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend an interesting, local restaurant for you to try.

Evening: You are free to explore the city by night, spend time with your fellow travelers at the hotel, or retire to your room to relax before tomorrow's day of discoveries.

Day 3 Essaouira • Optional Hidden Gems of Mogador tour

- Destination: Essaouira
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Atlas Essaouira or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, you are free to make your own discoveries in Essaouira. Some travelers find the city to be like a more relaxed version of Marrakesh. As you stroll along the beaches, perhaps you'll notice some windsurfers who have earned Essaouira its nickname of "Windy City, Africa." Elsewhere on the coastal side of town, you can take in impressive views from the seaside bastion of Skala de Ville, a favorite place for watching the sunset. You might visit the city's small museum, which displays historic jewelry, costumes, weapons, and tapestries, or go shopping in the *medina*.

Or join us on an optional tour to learn about the making of Argan oil. We'll first stop at a nearby village known for its colorful Berber market. Depending on what day of the week you visit, vendors can be seen selling produce or animals. Then, we'll continue on, keeping our eye out for goats climbing Argan trees. The process of making Argan oil actually begins with these agile, four-legged creatures. The Argan

tree, which is native to Morocco and Algeria, produces a plum-like fruit with a pit or nut in the center. The goats (which we may or may not observe) have adapted to climb the thorny, gnarled branches of the tree to eat the fruit, but cannot digest the center, and it is from this “nut” that Argan oil is made. We’ll then make our way to a local women’s cooperative that specializes in Argan production. While here, we’ll gain a deeper understanding of how these women in a remote area are improving their lives and making a sustainable income. We’ll have a chance to taste the Argan oil that these women produce and understand the process more in-depth.

Lunch: If you have joined our optional tour, we will stop for lunch at a vineyard, where you can taste some of the locally-produced wine and produce. Those who remain in Essaouira will dine on their own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Afternoon: Continue making your own independent discoveries this afternoon. Travelers who chose to take the optional tour will return to the hotel this afternoon and enjoy time to relax or explore independently for the remainder of the day.

Dinner: Dinner is on your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend a local restaurant for you to try.

Evening: Your last evening here is free for you to wander the streets through this seaside city, perhaps in search of live music.

Day 4 Overland to Casablanca • Visit oyster farm

- Destination: Casablanca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Casablanca or similar

Activity Note: Today, our transfer from Essaouira to Casablanca will involve an 8-hour bus ride, including stops along the way, over roads that may be bumpy or uneven at times.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll travel through Morocco via a different countryside route than the one we took on our way to Essaouira in order to reach Casablanca. The landscape will shift on this coastal road between sweeping views of the sea and remote fishing villages. Along the way, we’ll stop in the small fishing village of Oualidia, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and a saltwater lagoon on the other. Locally, Oualidia is known for its oyster farms and is referred to by many as “Morocco’s oyster capital.”

We’ll visit one of the oyster farms to learn about their harvesting techniques firsthand. While here, we’ll enjoy a tasting of these straight-from-the-sea shellfish. An oyster farmer will walk us through their daily routines, and you can ask any questions you may have. Our small group affords us the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of oyster harvesting and how this commodity impacts the local community.

Lunch: We will enjoy a traditional lunch, featuring seafood specialties, at a local restaurant in Oualidia.

Afternoon: We’ll continue on to Casablanca and check in to our hotel. Later, our Trip Experience Leader will take us on an orientation walk around the area.

Dinner: You're free to explore some of Casablanca's local cuisine on your own tonight. Consider asking your Trip Experience Leader about their favorite spots for dinner during the orientation walk.

Evening: Enjoy the freedom to explore Casablanca by night on your own this evening.

Day 5 Explore Casablanca • Hassan II Mosque

- Destination: Casablanca
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Casablanca or similar

Activity Note: During our visit to the mosque, both men and women will need to remove their shoes, and cover their legs and arms.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We will visit the famous Hassan II Mosque, the largest mosque in the country. During our time here, our Trip Experience Leader will give us insight into its complicated history.

Later this morning, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a walking tour of Casablanca's highlights, including Le Marche Central, the city's central market, and Bab Marrakech—an ornate sandstone arch which was once a gateway in the city walls.

Lunch: Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some of their favorite options for lunch on your own.

Afternoon: This afternoon, we'll visit the African Market, where we'll browse wares from local craftsmen.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: The evening is yours to spend as you choose—you are free to join fellow travelers in the main hotel area for a last drink, return to your room to rest before your departure in the morning, or enjoy one more night exploring the streets of Casablanca.

Day 6 Casablanca • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Early Morning: For those travelers with early departures this morning, there will be an early wake up call.

Breakfast: For those with an early departure, a light breakfast of coffee and baked goods will be served at the hotel. If you have a later departure, breakfast will be served at the usual time.

Morning: Drive to the Casablanca airport for your return flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Hidden Gems of Mogador (Day 3 \$95 per person)

Join us on an optional tour to learn about the making of Argan Oil—a process that begins with tree-climbing goats. The Argan tree, which is native to Morocco and Algeria, produces a plum-like fruit with a pit or nut in

the center. The goats have adapted to climb the thorny, gnarled branches of the tree to eat the fruit, but cannot digest the center, and it is from this “nut” that Argan Oil is made. We'll walk through countryside groves of Argan trees with cameras poised, in hopes of possibly capturing a photo of these unusual

animals. Then, we'll stop at the colorful Berber market in a nearby village. Then we'll visit a local women's cooperative that specializes in Argan production to learn how this useful oil is made. We'll even sample some ourselves when we sit down to a lunch at a local vineyard. This half-day tour includes lunch.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank pages
- **Northern Morocco pre-trip extension:** No additional pages needed.
- **Stopover in Amsterdam, Munich, or Rome:** You will need to add 2 additional pages to the applicable total listed above.
- **Stopover in Istanbul, London, Madrid, Paris, Cairo, or Dubai:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

No Visas Required

If you are on one of the optional stopovers listed below, we’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.

All visas information listed is only applicable if you are taking an optional stopover extension to a country with a required visa. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Egypt (optional stopover only): Visa required.** U.S. citizens will require a visa to enter Egypt; detailed instructions and information will be included in your Visa Packet, as noted above.
- **United Arab Emirates (optional stopover only): Visa required.** Currently, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) allows U.S. citizens to get a tourist visa free of charge on arrival in Dubai.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 7 locations in 15 days with two 1-night stays
- Two 8-9-hour transfers and three transfers of up to 5 hours

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 2-3 miles unassisted; expect 2-4 hours of physical activities on some days
- You will need to access vehicles by ladder without aid, and navigate multi-story accommodations which may have narrow staircases and no elevators
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

CLIMATE

- Between May and September, daytime temperatures average 90-100°F but can reach 110°F, dropping as low as 50°F at night
- In the Sahara, nights and mornings are quite cold between November and March; it could drop as low as 40°F at night
- The months of December through March bring heavy rain and thunderstorms

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over cobbled streets and sandy, uneven, and bumpy terrain in the Sahara that can cause problems for travelers with leg or back issues
- We travel via air-conditioned motorcoach (no toilet onboard), 4x4 vehicles, and camel

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 7–22 hours and will most likely have one or two connections of 2–3 hours each

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- We spend 2 nights in the Sahara in comfortable but basic canvas tents with electricity but without heat, and includes a bathroom inside and shower with tepid water inside of your tent. The main camp is a 3-minute walk away. **Please Note:** *Travelers on mid-April through May and August through mid-September departures will spend only 1 night at the tented camp due to the Sahara's intense summer heat. Travelers on these departures will spend the other night in a hotel in Erfoud*
- Hotels feature a variety of Western-style amenities and personal services. Some stays will be in *riads* (traditional multi-story Moroccan homes that have been restored and converted into hotels). *Riads* do not have elevators and will require the use of stairs.
- All hotels feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- Something to combat dehydration or heat stroke, such as salt tablets or powered sports drink/electrolytes

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink.
- **Complimentary bottled water is readily available on the bus.**

- You can also buy bottled water from local shops. Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly.
- Carry a bottle in your day bag at all times.
- Bottled drinks and juices are safe to drink as are hot drinks that have been boiled.
- Carry a bandanna to dry the tops of bottled drinks before and after opening, and for cleaning wet utensils or plates.
- We suggest that you use hand sanitizer after washing your hands in tap water.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Carry a handkerchief to dry any wet utensils or plates.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods.
- Fruit at included meals that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce when eating on your own.

Electricity Supply

A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. Travelers dependent on electricity supply for health reasons (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may want to consider a different O.A.T. adventure.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card. Traveler's checks are not accepted in Morocco.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need local currency instead.
- **Break large bills when you can.** Smaller bills (like the 10 and 20 dirham bills) make it easier to tip and pay in cash-only situations, like taxis.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Morocco: Moroccan Dirham (DH)

How to Exchange Money

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. In fact, your bank may not be able to change dollars in dirham because of the strict trade laws on Moroccan currency.

The easiest way is to withdraw funds from an ATM in Morocco. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars. You can also change money when you arrive at the airport, or at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices.

Leftover Moroccan currency cannot be easily exchanged after you have returned to the U.S., so the rule of thumb is spend it or change it back before you leave.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Morocco: Credit cards are accepted at many locations in tourist cities and for major purchases, but may incur a surcharge (usually about 5%). Most locations, especially smaller “Mom & Pop” shops or restaurants, are cash only.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** The equivalent \$1–2 per room, per night (about 10–20 dirhams)
- **Attendants in public restrooms:** In this part of the world, most public restrooms are manned by a staff that clean and supply toilet paper/paper towels. It is customary to leave a small tip for them of about 1–2 dirhams.

- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** When dining on your own, check your bill to see if a service charge was included (this is more common at high-end or tourist restaurants). If not, it is customary to leave a tip of around 5%-10% in restaurants and 3-5 dirhams for a drink in a cafe or bar.
- **Taxis:** Most locals will give a minimum of 7 dirhams as a tip.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, camp staff, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

When booking your international flights, please be advised that where you should join and depart from the group will depend on your trip extensions, if any. Please refer to the list below for details.

To join the group:

- **Pre-trip extension:** Your flight should be booked to Casablanca.
- **Main trip:** Your first hotel is in Rabat. You have 2 options for booking your flights—you can meet the group in Casablanca and have the option of purchasing an airport transfer with O.A.T. (you'll need to meet in Casablanca on the same day that the rest of the group arrives to be eligible for the transfer). OR, you can fly to Rabat and make your own way to the hotel.

Leaving the group:

- **All travelers:** Your flight should depart from Casablanca.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Wi-Fi may not always be available throughout your trip or may have a weak signal at times. This may impact your ability to use calling apps (as noted above) in certain locations.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Morocco: +212

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is up to 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: Checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+width+depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clam shell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p>Small additional bag: You may want to consider bringing a smaller bag to pack in your suitcase (or re-purpose your carry-on) for your stay at the tented camp because your main luggage will be stored on the bus for these nights.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy-duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- *TIP: When traveling with a companion we recommend “cross-packing,” i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion’s luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*
- **Carry-on bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during driving excursions and walking trips. Consider a backpack or waistpack that keeps both hands free and distributes the pack’s weight onto your back or hips.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Dress in layers:** As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, our list suggests several layers of clothing. Plan to dress in layers to keep warm at night, and adjust to changing conditions during the day. A few of our hotels are not heated, so indoor temperatures are about the same.
- **Quick-dry fabrics:** If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.
- **Footwear:** You’ll be on your feet and walking a lot, so choose your footwear carefully. You can find especially supportive shoes designed for walking.

Style Hints and Dress Codes

Morocco is a majority Muslim nation, but isn’t as conservative as others in the region. Many of the locals—especially the young—look to Europe for fashion trends. As a result, you will see some people in shorts, sleeveless tops, etc. And it is O.K. for you to wear them too, as long as you don’t mind that you might get occasional stares. But you’ll get a better response if you dress modestly. This means:

- **Covered shoulders and no low-cut necklines.** Local men tend to wear collared shirts or polo shirts rather than T-shirts. For women consider a loose, billowy top that covers you from the sun. Or bring a large scarf or shawl that you can drape over your bare shoulders when needed.

- **Shorts or skirts to the knee or below.** Mid-calf or capri pants are a popular choice for women travelers. (It is perfectly acceptable for women to wear pants; you are not required to wear a skirt or a dress.) Just make sure to bring at least one pair of longer pants for hiking or camel riding.
- **Context matters.** Generally in places of worship or in someone's home it is better to cover up your shoulders and legs. When touring in large cities or enjoying outdoors activities, you can relax the rules a bit.
- **Women don't need to cover their hair**, except *perhaps* in a mosque, where it is considered a sign of respect. Each mosque has different rules, so if one requires it, your Trip Experience Leader will warn you beforehand. Mosques that require headscarves will have extras to lend or rent, so you don't need to bring one with you.

And lastly, dress on our trip is functional and casual; there are no formal evenings.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Year-Round Clothing Checklist

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable or wicking fabric. Polo or collared shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. Billowy or loose tops will help you deal with the heat while staying covered from the sun.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. We recommend that you bring at least one lighter pair for the day, and one a bit heavier for warmth at night in the desert. Mid-length or capri pants are a popular choice for women travelers, but you'll need at least one long pair for hiking or camel riding.
- ☐ Walking shorts: Cut long for modesty
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking or running shoes.
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater (motor coach air conditioning can be cold)
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Optional: Swimsuit, in case a hotel has a whirlpool or pool

- ☐ Optional: Travel skirt(s)
- ☐ Optional: Large scarf. Can be used as a head covering, shawl, or fashion accessory

Additional Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For fall and winter (October through February):

Please be aware, at many locations, there is no heating available during the winter. The nights will get cold. We advise you pack accordingly.

- ☐ Medium- or expedition-weight long thermal underwear top.
- ☐ Long thermal underwear bottoms
- ☐ Light wool or fleece sweater
- ☐ Polartec fleece jacket, or a medium-weight insulated parka.
- ☐ Warm hat and light gloves

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but most hotels do not provide a washcloth.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lens
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30%-35% strength). Flies can be a serious nuisance in the Sahara.
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking chapstick
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Hand sanitizer or anti-bacterial moist towelettes (not individual packets)
- ☐ Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb

- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger.

TIP: We suggest bringing more than one battery for your camera so you can use one battery while the other is charging.

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Something to combat dehydration or heat stroke, such as salt tablets or powered sports drink/electrolytes
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

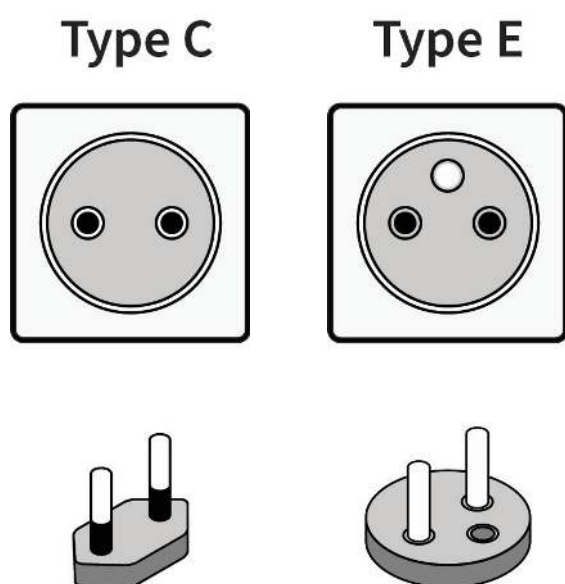
Electricity in Morocco is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are multiple plug types in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Morocco: C or E



Availability

You will have electricity in your tent at the Sahara Desert Camp. However—just like in many parts of Morocco—the electricity is supplied by a generator and/or solar panels. As a result, the lighting in the tents or in some of your hotels may not be as bright as you are used to. Also we do not recommend using items like electric shavers or hairdryers as these tend to overload the system. Charging camera batteries or phones is fine, but may take longer than back at home.

Lastly, Morocco is prone to occasional power outages. A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. Travelers dependent on electricity supply for health reasons (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may want to consider a different O.A.T. adventure.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Morocco: Morocco experiences a wide range of climates, from the arid climes of the Sahara, to the snow-capped Atlas Mountains. Inland, and especially in the Sahara, temperatures are frequently very hot during the day, depending on the season. Nights are cooler, and can even be cold from November through March. The coldest months are December–February when temperatures in the mountain areas can drop to near freezing, and snow is possible. There is little cloud cover and almost no rain in this desert region. In Marrakesh, the weather is pleasant year round, thanks to cool breezes blowing off the Atlas Mountains. Further north in Rabat, along Morocco’s Atlantic coast, the weather is very mild, with cool temperatures and moderate clouds.

Sandstorms: A sandstorm is when a strong wind picks up loose sand particles and carries them over a distance; typically this phenomenon occurs in desert regions. Sandstorms are usually expected in April–May and September–October, but can occur at any time of year, and if severe can affect our itinerary. Should a sandstorm occur please listen to and follow all instructions for your own safety.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	RABAT, MOROCCO			FEZ, MOROCCO		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	62 to 46	90 to 67	3.2	61 to 43	--	2.5
FEB	63 to 49	90 to 68	2.7	64 to 45	--	2.6
MAR	66 to 50	90 to 65	2.6	66 to 46	--	2.8
APR	67 to 52	91 to 65	2.2	70 to 48	--	2.5
MAY	71 to 56	90 to 65	1.0	77 to 54	--	1.4
JUN	74 to 61	90 to 65	0.3	84 to 59	--	0.6
JUL	80 to 65	90 to 65	--	93 to 64	--	0.1
AUG	80 to 65	91 to 66	--	93 to 66	--	0.1
SEP	79 to 64	92 to 65	0.3	88 to 63	--	0.5
OCT	74 to 58	90 to 64	1.8	77 to 55	--	1.8
NOV	69 to 53	88 to 66	3.3	68 to 48	--	2.7
DEC	64 to 49	90 to 69	4.0	63 to 43	--	2.9

MONTH	MARRAKESH, MOROCCO			CASABLANCA, MOROCCO		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	64 to 43	80 to 44	1.1	62 to 47	91 to 71	2.2
FEB	67 to 47	82 to 45	1.2	63 to 50	91 to 72	2.1
MAR	72 to 50	80 to 40	1.4	64 to 51	91 to 71	2.0
APR	74 to 53	80 to 40	1.3	66 to 53	91 to 72	1.5
MAY	80 to 57	79 to 38	0.7	69 to 58	89 to 71	0.8
JUN	87 to 62	78 to 35	0.3	73 to 64	89 to 74	0.2
JUL	97 to 69	69 to 28	0.1	77 to 68	89 to 74	--
AUG	97 to 69	69 to 28	0.1	78 to 68	91 to 74	--
SEP	90 to 66	71 to 32	0.3	77 to 66	91 to 73	0.2
OCT	80 to 59	76 to 39	0.8	72 to 60	90 to 71	1.3
NOV	72 to 52	77 to 42	1.5	68 to 54	89 to 73	2.6
DEC	66 to 45	79 to 45	1.1	64 to 50	91 to 73	2.9

MONTH	TANGIER, MOROCCO			ESSAOUIRA, MOROCCO		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	61 to 47	87 to 70	4.1	63 to 54	83 to 77	2.0
FEB	62 to 49	87 to 70	3.9	64 to 56	84 to 79	1.2
MAR	64 to 50	86 to 68	2.8	64 to 57	84 to 80	1.2
APR	66 to 52	87 to 67	2.4	65 to 58	85 to 80	0.8
MAY	70 to 56	87 to 65	1.5	66 to 60	85 to 80	0.4
JUN	76 to 61	86 to 62	0.6	68 to 63	86 to 83	0.4
JUL	83 to 66	84 to 57	0.1	69 to 65	89 to 84	0.4
AUG	83 to 67	85 to 59	0.1	70 to 65	88 to 84	0.4
SEP	81 to 66	85 to 60	0.6	71 to 65	87 to 83	0.4
OCT	73 to 60	85 to 64	2.6	69 to 63	85 to 81	0.8
NOV	67 to 54	87 to 68	5.3	67 to 60	82 to 78	2.0
DEC	63 to 50	86 to 70	5.1	65 to 56	84 to 79	1.6

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Moroccan Culture

For the adventurous soul, the challenges of traveling in Morocco—in addition to the country's beauty and history—make it a uniquely rewarding destination. You should be prepared for dust and large crowds in Fez's medina and in Marrakesh. In addition, poverty and beggars can be distressing for some travelers. During the holiday of Ramadan, we may need to make adjustments to our itinerary due to holiday hours and some restaurants may be closed.

Religion & Ramadan Festival

Islam is the predominant religion in Morocco, so an understanding of the religion will assist your discoveries. Practicing Muslims are expected to pray five times daily: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact time is listed in the local newspaper each day. The call to prayer, called the ezan, is sung or broadcast from minaret towers to remind the faithful that it is time to pray. Friday is the Muslim Sabbath day, so some businesses will be closed or have limited hours.

When visiting a mosque, it is polite to be modestly dressed (no bare shoulders, no short skirts or shorts). You will be asked to remove your shoes before entering. In most mosques, women visitors are not required to cover their hair, but in others you may be asked to do so. Typically, a mosque that requires special dress for female visitors will have pieces to lend or rent.

The biggest religious holiday is Ramadan, a month-long celebration that is meant to teach the values of restraint and charity. To participate, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. The fast is strict and includes no eating, drinking alcohol, cigarette-smoking, or gum-chewing during daylight hours. But as the sun starts to set, everyone rushes home so they can celebrate iftar—the joyous breaking of the fast. Suddenly the evening comes alive with music, eating, and shopping. The festivities often continue well into the night. The mosques and some streets are decorated with lanterns, special meals are prepared, and nighttime social events and festivals are planned.

If you'll be visiting Morocco during Ramadan, what does this mean for you? Visitors are not required to fast, but out of respect you shouldn't eat, drink, or smoke openly. (It is OK to eat indoors, but you wouldn't sit outside with food.) Expect that some restaurants will be closed

and others may not serve alcohol, but your Trip Experience Leader will be on hand to advise you of places to eat. Also, it is important to keep in mind that many of the people you meet will be participating in the fast, so they might not be their usual selves. It helps to have a bit of patience.

Ramadan follows a lunar calendar, so its dates change significantly from year to year.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Moroccan Cuisine

Moroccan cooking blends Berber, Arabic, African, Spanish, and French traditions to create a culinary canon that is at once complex and delicate. Sweet and sour dishes were introduced by the Arabs, who borrowed them from Persia. Many breads were introduced by sub-Saharan African cultures. And there is a strong tradition of preserving and pickling fruits and vegetables, a contribution of Morocco's Jewish communities. Some dishes you might find while exploring Morocco include:

- **B'ssara:** A rich soup of dried broad beans swirled with olive oil, sprinkled with cumin, and enjoyed with warm bread.

- **Briouats:** A vegetarian option, *briouats* are crunchy, triangular pockets of *warqa* (phyllo dough) filled with meat, cheese, or vegetables. (There are also sweet varieties.)
- **Bstilla:** A sweet dinner consisting of a flaky casserole of phyllo pastry layered with pigeon or chicken; and flavored with almonds scented with orange flower water, saffron, and cinnamon and dusted with confectioners' sugar.
- **Kefta:** A dish of spiced beef or lamb meatballs simmered with tomatoes and poached eggs.
- **Chermoula:** A popular street food, *chermoula* is a sauce stuffed into grilled sardines and vegetables. The sauce contains a mix of spices, olive oil, fresh coriander, and lemon juice.
- **Babbouche:** A soup of snails in the shell swimming in a garlicky broth.
- **Kaab el ghazal:** Or Gazelle's ankles, a dessert of thin, sugary crescents filled with almonds and orange blossom water.
- **Roze bil heleeb:** A dessert of creamy rice custard topped with shredded coconut and almonds or pistachios, flavored with cinnamon and orange blossom.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Morocco

Morocco offers many fine craft items at good prices. Traditional souvenirs include gold and silver jewelry, wood carvings, cotton goods, tapestries, carpets, leather goods, pottery, copperware, brassware, basketry, fine inlaid woodwork, and spices.

Bargaining: Some shops have fixed prices. In the open-air markets prices are usually flexible and negotiating is normal. The only rule is that if you make an offer, you should be prepared to buy at that price. Bring a mix of small bills so that you can pay in exact change. Moroccans enjoy negotiating over prices, and they expect it of their customers.

Many shops in Morocco are closed on Fridays. If they are open, they may close from mid-day prayer until early afternoon.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **www.cbp.gov** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Morocco

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 172,414 square miles
- **Capital:** Rabat
- **Languages:** Arabic and Berber are the official languages; French and Spanish are also spoken.
- **Location:** Morocco is bordered by Algeria in the east, Mauritania in the south, the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and Spain in the north.
- **Geography:** Morocco's landscape varies from coastal lands near the Atlantic Ocean to mountainous regions to the Sahara Desert.
- **Population:** 37,984,655 (Estimate)
- **Religions:** Muslim 99%, Other 1%
- **Time zone:** Morocco is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 5am in Washington D.C., it is 11am in Rabat. Morocco does not observe Daylight Savings, therefore Morocco is only 5 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time when Daylight Savings is in effect.

National Holidays: Morocco

In addition to the holidays listed below, Morocco celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/11 Anniversary of the Independence Manifesto

05/01 Labour Day/May Day

07/30 Feast of the Throne

08/14 Anniversary of the Recovery
Oued Ed-Dahab

08/20 Anniversary of the Revolution of the
King and the People

08/21 Youth Day

11/06 Anniversary of the Green March

11/18 Independence Day

Morocco: A Brief History

Morocco is unique for having been occupied by one group of people for all of its recorded history—people who have rarely been subjugated by outside forces. The Berbers or Imazighen (men of the land) have endured for millennia. They are not a homogenous group, but comprise

various tribes who share some ethnic lineage. Nor were all Berbers nomads despite the stereotype. Most Berbers were farmers, but connected to fellow Berber traders and horsemen who developed semi-permanent encampments as they forged trade routes.

The Berbers often frustrated Roman attempts to govern them, though their rebellion was not always violent but often based on shrewd alliances and gamesmanship. Most Berbers continued to practice their traditional, animist religions. They also borrowed from other African and Egyptian religions, and as the millennium turned, many Berbers were Christian or Jewish.

In the 7th century AD, the Ummayyad Arabs conquered the Middle East in less than a decade, but needed 70 years to subdue Morocco's Berbers. They brought the Arab language, architecture, civil codes, and mostly, the new religion of Islam. Its ideals resonated with traditional Berber values and its adoption was widespread, rapid, and willing. But the Arabs were never able to unify the region politically. Though they enlisted Berber vassals to lead their conquest of Iberia, the sprawling caliphate proved difficult to manage, paving the way for Arab-Berber dynasties such as the Almoravids, Almohads, and Nasrids, who presided over Moorish Iberia, called al-Andalus. These dynasties have ruled Morocco continuously from the 8th century to the present.

When the Moors were expelled from al-Andalus in 1492, Muslim and Jewish refugees brought their cultures back to Morocco, enriching the Imperial Cities of Fez, Marrakesh, Rabat, and Meknes. Rulers rose and fell for 140 years and in the 1630s, the Alaouite family overthrew the Saadis, establishing a line that rules to this day. In the late 1800s, Morocco's strategic location and natural resources attracted France, which took control by 1912. Spain hung onto a small protectorate on the coast, Tangier was made an international zone, and Rabat became the capital. When Berbers rebelled in 1926, it took 25,000 Spanish-French troops to subdue them.

During WWII, Morocco was ruled by Vichy France, which was a Nazi puppet. But independent-minded Casablanca provided crucial support for the Allied North African campaign. *After the war in 1944*, Morocco demanded freedom, and France was eventually pressured to grant it. Mohammed V returned from exile in 1955; Morocco won its independence in 1956; Mohammed V crowned himself king in 1957; and handed power to his son, Hassan II, in 1961. Hassan II earned the people's affection in 1975 when he led the Green March into the Western Sahara to force Spain to hand over the province. More than 350,000 volunteers marched that day, but the dispute between Morocco and the western separatist Polisario Front still simmers.

Mohammed VI took the throne in 1999, and advanced many liberal policies including women's rights. In 2002, he married Salma Bennani, a computer science engineer, and many believed it symbolized the acceptance of modern roles. In 2004, the government imposed changes to family law geared toward lifting the gender inequality and protecting children. During the Arab Spring of 2011, Mohammed VI reacted with a deftness that eluded other leaders, announcing constitutional reforms, ceding more power to parliament, and making Berber an official state language. But Mohammed VI has increasingly been criticized for repressing freedom of speech, and the nation still struggles with poverty, unemployment, and corruption in the justice system.

Events that Shaped the 20th Century:

Morocco's Battle Against Colonialism

Situated at the entrance of the Mediterranean, with the Atlantic to the west and the Strait of Gibraltar to the north, Morocco has historically been a strategic location to control.

France had always shown an interest in fully conquering Morocco for centuries, interested in the land for its access to the Atlantic and Mediterranean, as well as its border with French-controlled Algeria. While France had slowly been taking over Morocco from the Algerian border and had their increasing military influence recognized by most world powers following the signing of the Treaty of Algeciras, France wanted more. And, on March 19, 1907, the assassination of Émile Mauchamp, a French doctor, in Marrakesh by an anti-French occupation mob, was just the reason they needed.

After snapping up more towns along the Algerian border, including Bechar and Oujda, France began their assault in earnest. The Moroccan people, incensed by the encroachment of the French and the disregard for their own sovereignty, responded by killing nine European laborers. Surprising the French, the Moroccans then managed to take back Casablanca. On August 5th, 1907, France retaliated and bombed Casablanca, destroying the city and killing thousands of Moroccans. France pushed into the region of Chaouia, a campaign that lasted 7 years, ending in France's control over the region. France also encroached from the east, using their Algerian border to facilitate their invasion.

The tribes of Morocco, instead of banding together against France, split their allegiance, with the sultan of Morocco, Abd al-Aziz bin Hassan, doing little to oppose France. The people of Fez however, called for war and instead supported the sultan's older brother, Abd al-Hafid. This devolved into a brief civil war, with Sultan al-Aziz gathering an army before marching to Marrakesh to confront his older brother's forces. The Sultan's army was ambushed in the Battle of Marrakesh, and Sultan al-Aziz was forced to flee back behind French lines in Casablanca, where he later announced his abdication.

Sultan al-Hafid took power and nothing changed. The French were still encroaching on Moroccan sovereignty, with their campaign in the region of Chaouia. By 1911, a rebellion broke out against Sultan al-Hafid and he was besieged at his palace in Fez, forcing him to call upon the French to protect him. The French forces used this opportunity to take Fez.

Following the rebellion, Sultan al-Hafid, under duress, signed the Treaty of Fez, recognizing French control of certain areas of Morocco and giving the French Resident-General absolute power over both internal and external affairs. In the aftermath of the failed rebellion in Fez, France had managed to maneuver themselves into the position of power they had wanted from the start.

The Moroccan people reacted violently in a series of riots that became known later as the Bloody Days of Fez. During the riots, many Moroccan soldiers, under French commanders, joined the riots, attacking their commanders before moving to the European and Jewish quarters of Fez. Believing the Jewish populace to be helping the rioters, the French commander ordered the Jewish quarter be shelled. According to the Moroccan historian, Mohammed Kenbib, 66 Europeans, 42 Moroccan Jews and some 600 Moroccan Muslims were killed over the course of the two days of rioting.

After signing the treaty and retreating to Rabat, Sultan al-Hafid abdicated in favor of his youngest brother, Yusef.

The French Colonial Administrator, Hubert Lyautey, worked to maintain Morocco's independent culture, focusing instead on colonial education and urbanization, rather than the traditional assimilation route taken by France in Algeria and Tunisia. He worked closely with the Sultan, allowing the sovereign to retain cultural, practical, and religious power in Morocco.

When World War I and World War II swept through Europe, France recruited from the Moroccan infantry, with thousands of Moroccans making up the Moroccan Brigade, fighting for the French with little to no recognition.

Following World War II, Sultan Mohammed V, who succeeded his father, Sultan Yusef, in 1927, called for Moroccan Independence. Becoming the face of Morocco's independence movement, Sultan Mohammed V aligned himself with a series of nationalist movements and call for Morocco to join the Arab League. Demonstrating in front of huge crowds, he appealed for independence in several momentous speeches, including the Tangier Speech.

On August 20th, 1953, Sultan Mohammed V was forced out of Morocco by French authorities, exiled to Corsica, and later Madagascar, with his immediate family. In his place, France installed Mohammed Ben Aarafa, Sultan Mohammed V's first cousin once removed. The "French Sultan" was not recognized by the Moroccan people, and, in response, the nationalist movement bombed the central market in Casablanca on Christmas Eve 1953.

Supported by Libya, the National Liberation Front in Algeria, and Egypt, the nationalist movement managed to put pressure on the French and forced them to renegotiate Sultan Mohammed V's exile in 1955. Upon the Sultan's return, he managed to negotiate Morocco's independence and French Morocco became the Kingdom of Morocco with Mohammed V established as King on August 14th, 1957.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General North Africa

Sahara Unveiled: A Journey Across the Desert by William Langewiesche (1996, Travel Narrative). An unusually rich and insightful travel memoir about across the Sahara.

The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century by Ross Dunn (1986, Memoir). Born in Tangier, Ibn Battuta was known as the “Traveler of Islam.” In thirty years of travel, Battuta visited the lands of every Muslim ruler, covering 750,000 miles and traveling to the Maghreb, Arabia, India, China, Indonesia, and even Russia.

The Sheltering Sky by Paul Bowles (1949, Literature). Bowles’ most famous work, the tale of three American travelers whose lives unravel in the desert of North Africa. Another interesting work by the same author is *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue*, a collection of eight travel essays, mostly on North Africa, but also India, Sri Lanka, and South America.

Morocco

In the Country of Others by Leïla Slimani (2020, Historical Fiction). Set in French-colonized Morocco following World War II, Mathilde settles into life in Morocco with her husband, Amine. Mathilde, a proud Frenchwoman, struggles with the unfamiliar sociality expectations as her husband, a soldier turned farmer, faces opposition as a Moroccan man married to a French woman. This award-winning novel views an interracial love story through the lenses of Morocco’s fight for independence from French colonialism.

The Last Storytellers by Richard Hamilton (2011, Anthology) Wander through Marrakech’s legendary Jmaa el Fna square, and among the snake charmers, musicians, jugglers and hawkers, you may occasionally notice a storyteller holding court. As the tradition of publicly recounting folktales or fables slowly dies, Hamilton has here collected the best of these engaging stories.

Horses of God by Mahi Binebine (2010, Literary Fiction). On May 16th, 2003, Casablanca suffered the deadliest attack in Morocco’s history with fourteen suicide bombers killing forty-three people and over a hundred people were injured in the attacks. *Horses of God* views the attacks, perpetuated by young adults from the shantytowns of Sidi Moumen, from one of the suicide bombers looking back on his life after death. Starting from childhood, Binebine raises four young boys through poverty and violence to a desperate bid for purpose in religious extremism.

The Caliph’s House, A Year in Casablanca by Tahir Shah (2006, Memoir). An entertaining account of the transformation of a ruined palace in Casablanca. Shah is a marvelous storyteller, interweaving Moroccan customs, history, black humor, and portraits of neighbors into one work.

Dreams of Trespass, Tales of a Harem Girlhood by Fatima Mernissi (1994, Memoir). This memoir captures the true story of Mernissi's life growing up in a Fez harem during World War II. The harem was not an exotic seraglio of concubines but rather a part of the house where all the women of a family are secluded.) A coming of age story with vivid and often hilarious detail.

Suggested Films & Videos

Morocco

Changing Times (2004, Comedy/Drama) A French engineer (Gérard Depardieu) contrives a job in Tangier in order to reconnect with a lost lover of thirty years (Catherine Deneuve.) Various other characters and subplots cast an interesting light on modern urban Moroccan life.

Le Grand Voyage (2004, Drama). Driving his dad to Mecca for the Islamic pilgrimage is not what Reda, a French-Moroccan teenager, had planned. But plans change in this emotional road trip that explores the generational and cultural divide experienced by the many Moroccan immigrants. In French and Arabic with subtitles.

Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Streets (2000, Crime Drama). Four homeless young boys in Casablanca dream of a better life. When their leader is killed by a rival gang, the three remaining boys are determined to give him a proper funeral, but are faced with the rival gang and their own uncertainties as they try to gather the resources needed.

Hideous Kinky (1999, Drama) Kate Winslet plays a free-spirited, single British mother who decamps with her daughters to Morocco to find herself. Optimistic despite financial and personal setbacks, she remains dangerously oblivious to the needs of her children. A thoughtful look at Morocco's 1970s hippie mystique, and its reality.

The Sheltering Sky (1990, Adventure/Drama) An unhappy American couple ventures deep into the North African desert in the hopes of rekindling their relationship. The farther they go, the more the chasm between them widens. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, starring Debra Winger and John Malkovich, and featuring Paul Bowles, who wrote the book.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

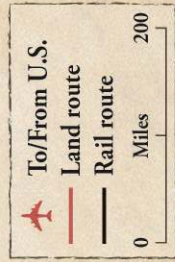
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



Mediterranean Sea

Volubilis
 (Optional Tour)
 Rabat
 Casablanca
 Marrakesh
 Ait Benhaddou
 Ouarzazate
 El Khorbat
 Rissani
 Erfoud
 Merzouga
 Fez
 Meknes
 (Optional Tour)
 Ifrane
 Midelt

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 A L G E R I A

ATLANTIC COAST
 POST-TRIP EXTENSION
 Casablanca
 Oualidia
 Essaouira
 Atlantic Ocean
 MOROCCO

MALI

MAURITANIA

NORTHERN MOROCCO
 PRE-TRIP EXTENSION
 Tangier
 Chefchaouen
 Rabat
 Casablanca
 Mediterranean Sea
 Atlantic Ocean
 MOROCCO

CANARY ISLANDS

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