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HIGHLIGHTS OF MOROCCO 11 DAY SAMPLE ITINERARY

Morocco is located on the northernmost extension of the African continent at the gateway to Europe. It has a variety of geological features, including a long coastline, interior lowlands extending into the foothills and highlands of the Rif Mountains and the Middle Atlas and High Atlas ranges which sore up to 4,150m (13,700ft). Between the mountain ranges and the Atlantic lie plains and plateaus of fertile agricultural lands. To the east the arid mountain slopes drop into the unforgiving Sahara desert.

Your Morocco itinerary is by no means a circuit of palaces, mosques and ruins, it is an exploration of the highlights of Morocco from cities to souks and medinas, mountains, valleys, gorges and desert.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience a camel ride in the Sahara Desert
- Pass through the Todra Gorge and the Atlas Mountains
- Soak up the local culture in the medina of Fez
- Immersion in the four imperial cities of Morocco

DAY 1: ARRIVAL CASABLANCA

Welcome to Morocco! On arrival in Casablanca, you will be met outside the terminal building by your private English-speaking driver, who will transfer you to the hotel and accompany you throughout the journey. After check-in, relax for a while and later set off for the **Hassan II Mosque**, the largest mosque in Morocco and the 5th largest mosque in the world.

Overnight: Casablanca

DAY 2 : CASABLANCA – RABAT - FEZ

Breakfast

After breakfast, depart for **Fez**, stopping en route in **Rabat** to visit the following historical sites:

The Mausoleum of King Mohammed V who lies in state on the very place where, upon his return from exile in Madagascar, he gathered thousands of Moroccans together to thank God for giving independence to their country. The opulent tomb chamber is a showcase of Moroccan traditional design, and has a grand marble tomb and walls covered in zellige tiles.

The 12th century Hassan Tower. Built by the Almohads, the unfinished Hassan Tower was the work of ruler Yacoub al-Mansour and would have been the minaret for his grand vision of a mosque on this site. Upon his death in 1150, construction was abandoned and this 45m tower is all that remains of his original plan. Beautiful and intricate motifs and designs cover the tower's facade, pointing to the sumptuousness of what al-Mansour had in mind.

The Fortress of Oudayas, whose cliff-top perch offers magnificent views over the river and ocean. Continue on your way to Fez, the spiritual capital of Morocco.

Overnight: Fez

DAY 3: MEDINA OF FEZ

Breakfast

Today you will enjoy a guided tour in the UNESCO-listed **Medina of Fez**, which was founded in the 9th century and is home to the oldest university in the world. Pass through the Blue Gate and explore the old town of Fez by walking along the narrow and winding streets. Your guide will take you to the **King's Palace**, the tanneries and potteries to soak up the Arabic and Islamic culture.

Leisure time this afternoon to discover the charm of the oldest imperial city in Morocco. With fresh fruits, mounds of spices, mosaic artworks and various handicrafts being sold on both sides of the street, you will feel as though you have been transported back to medieval times!

Overnight: Fez.



Fez Blue Gate (Flickr, Vladimer Shoshvili)



Fez Medina (Flickr, Dan Lundberg)

DAY 4: FEZ - VOLUBILIS - MOULAY IDRIS - MEKNES - FEZ

Breakfast

Morning excursion with your driver to the **Ruins of Volubilis**, a well preserved and partly excavated Roman city. On to **Moulay Idriss**, located 5km from the Volubilis ruins and considered to be the holiest city in Morocco. The white houses in serried ranks spread across the base of the Atlas Mountains.

After lunch, head for **Meknes** to take in the medieval ambiance. With fewer tourists, Meknes provides an opportunity to interact with locals and experience the authentic Moroccan lifestyle.

Overnight: Fez.

DAY 5: FEZ - THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS - ERFOUD

Breakfast, Set menu Dinner

Today will be the longest drive of your tour; your private English-speaking driver will transfer you to Erfoud. You will see a forest of cedar trees in the Middle Atlas Mountains, then travel on past Ifrane, a ski resort town with European flavor, before descending the mountain to have lunch (own account) in Midelt, a town with great views of the Eastern High Atlas. After lunch, snake down to the Ziz Valley and the Tafilalt oases with its dense palm trees.

Late arrival in Erfoud which serves as a gateway to the mighty Sahara in the south.

Overnight: Erfoud

DAY 6: ERFOUD – MERZOUGA

Breakfast, Set menu Dinner

After some free time in the morning, you will transfer to a local hotel where you and your luggage will await the arrival of the camel/4x4 professionals who will lead you out to your desert bivouac.

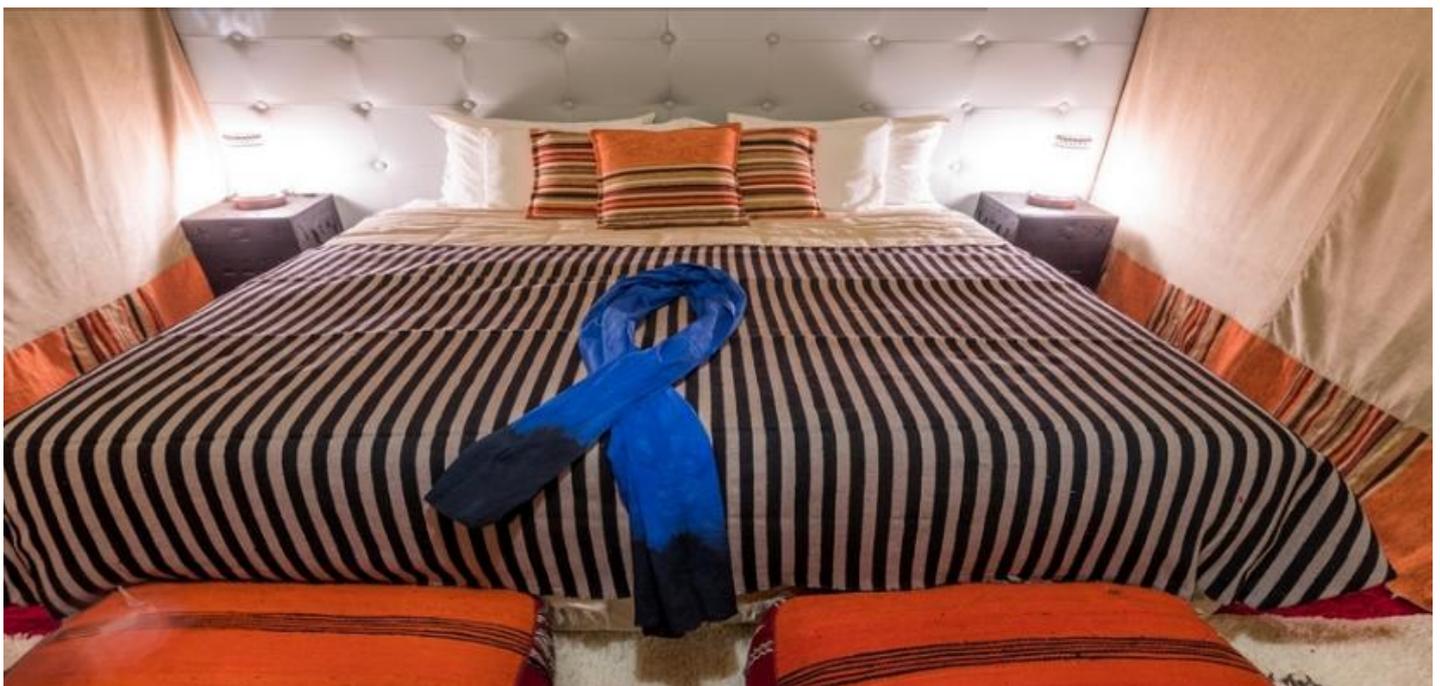
To reach our bivouac you will enjoy a ride on camel back with a stop on the way to admire the sunset from the top of the dunes of Merzouga.

The bivouac has 8 typical Berber tents all with en-suite bathroom and hot water, a separate restaurant tent and a lovely corner covered with Moroccan carpets where you can relax and admire the milky way.

After dinner you will be able to enjoy the camp percussion group playing around a camp fire.

(The two hour camel ride is challenging and may be uncomfortable for those with joint or back pain.)

Transportation via 4x4 vehicles will be provided upon request.)



Inside your Berber tent

DAY 7: MERZOUGA - OUARZAZATE

Breakfast

Wake early and climb a dune to sit quietly or take some stunning photographs. After breakfast, transfer to **Dades Gorge** with a detour at **Tinerhir**, famed for its beautiful palm grove, and Jewish quarter.

Visit **Todra Gorge**, the highest oasis valley gorge in Morocco with 300m sheer cliffs and a mouth just 20m wide. Continue your journey to Ouarzazate for overnight.



Tinerhir (Flickr, Guillen Perez)



Todra Gorge (Flickr, Peter Collins)

DAY 8: OUARZAZATE - MARRAKECH

Breakfast

Set off for the **Ksar of Ait Ben Haddou**, a striking example of the architecture of southern Morocco, located in the foothills on the southern slopes of the High Atlas Mountains. The famous movies *Gladiator* and *Jesus of Nazareth* were filmed here. Ait Ben Haddou is an ancient fortified village along the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech. Over time most villagers moved out to live in modern dwellings in a village on the other side of the river, although there are four families still living in the ancient village. Inside the walls of the ksar are half a dozen *Kasbahs* or merchants houses and other individual dwellings, all great examples of Moroccan earthen clay architecture.

Continue to **Marrakech** and enjoy free time for the remainder of the day.

Overnight: Marrakech



Ait Ben Haddou (Flickr, Rodrigo Silva)

DAY 9: MARRAKECH CITY TOUR

Breakfast

Your city sightseeing tour starts at the brilliant **Bahia Palace** and moves to the **Saadian Tombs** where you will find many treasures. After lunch, visit the **Koutoubia Mosque** and take a leisurely stroll through its gardens. On to the famous **Jemaa el-Fnaa**, the market place (souk) in Marrakech's medina quarter. End your day exploring the souk where you will experience local trading and perhaps buy some special souvenirs.

Overnight: Marrakech



Saadian Tombs (Flickr, Mike Prince)



Bahia Palace (Flickr, Chris)

DAY 10: MARRAKECH

Breakfast

Today is a leisure day to explore the city on your own, browsing through the streets, rambling in the magical parks, shopping in the old medina. Soak up the local atmosphere and culture in this fascinating city and enjoy the full day at your own pace.

Overnight: Marrakech

DAY 11: MARRAKECH - CASABLANCA, DEPARTURE

Breakfast

Leisure time before being transferred to the Casablanca airport for your flight home. Enjoy your last views of Morocco during the 3 hour drive to the airport.



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