



ACADEMY
TRAVEL

TAILORED
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS

MOROCCO

THE GRAND TOUR

OVERVIEW

Discover the best of Morocco on this 19-day tour, from its rich and diverse architectural heritage to its vibrant cultural traditions, stunning landscapes and unique gastronomy.

Led by archaeologist Ben Churcher, we'll soak in Morocco's vibrant blend of Roman, Arab, Byzantine and Berber heritage as we explore the characteristic art and architecture of Islamic Morocco, with its intricate stucco and wood carving and colourful zellij mosaic tilework.

We'll see charming medieval towns with their warrens of market streets and exquisitely decorated medersas as well as cities that boast labyrinthine souks, palaces and gardens. And we'll take in Morocco's spectacular natural scenery, from the High Atlas Mountains and to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and the edge of the Sahara Desert.

A perfect blend of culture, incredible landscapes and local delicacies, this tour will take you in a leisurely manner to the best of what this region has to offer.



TOUR LEADER

Ben Churcher is an archaeologist who works in the Near East and with Aboriginal archaeology in Australia. He holds a BA (Hons) from the University of Queensland and a Dip. Ed from the University of Sydney.

TOUR DATES

October 16 - November 3, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$12,820 per person, twin share
\$2,295 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Rabat (2 nights), Tangier (2 nights), Chefchaouen (1 night), Fes (4 nights), Marrakesh (3 nights), Ouarzazate (2 nights), Taroudant (1 night), Essaouira (2 nights), Casablanca (1 night)

INCLUSIONS

18 nights' accommodation in centrally located 3 to 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 11 lunches and 9 dinners. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Start & Finish

The tour starts at 10.00am on Wednesday 16 October, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca.

The tour ends after breakfast on Sunday 3 November, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

Wednesday 16 October

Arrive Casablanca

The tour commences at the hotel in Casablanca at 10.00am. Meet your tour leader and fellow travellers in the lobby of the hotel for an orientation tour of Casablanca before travelling to Rabat, where we'll spend our first two nights. On arrival in Rabat, we'll take after an orientation walk, before enjoying welcome drinks and dinner together. Overnight Rabat (D)

Thursday 17 October

Rabat

We begin the day with a visit to the archaeological site of Chellah, a Roman trading post later used as a royal burial ground by 13th and 14th-century dynastic rulers. We continue to the Archaeological Museum and its magnificent collection of Roman bronzes. After lunch we'll see the imposing tower of the ruined 12th-century Hassan mosque alongside the grand modern mausoleum of Mohammad V. We stop at the Kasbah des Oudaïas with its 12th-century fortifications, Andalusian garden, charming whitewashed houses and view across the Bou Regreg estuary to the old walled town of Salé on the other side. Overnight Rabat (B, L)

Friday 18 October

Lixus & Tanger

This morning we leave Rabat to drive along the coast to Tanger. We stop to visit the picturesque though overgrown ruins of ancient Lixus, in Roman times a wealthy port famous for its salt and garum, a pungent fish sauce featured in many Roman recipes. On the way to the acropolis we'll see the public baths and the amphitheatre that once staged wild beast shows and gladiatorial contests. After lunch at a restaurant by the sea we continue to Tanger. Overnight Tanger (B, L)

Saturday 19 October

Tanger

A gateway between Africa and Europe, Tanger once had a reputation for seediness, but has now polished up its allure as an international tourist spot. We'll begin with the American Legation Museum, an historic building with an interesting art collection and a section dedicated to American composer and writer Paul Bowles, who spent most his life in the city. A walk through the medina's streets will take us past the once-

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Marrakesh

Marvel at the elegant Koutoubia minaret, which towers over this vibrant city's powder-pink medina and bustling central square. Wander through luxuriant gardens and fine examples of Islamic architecture.

Tanger

Explore this buzzy Moroccan port on the Strait of Gibraltar. A strategic gateway between Africa and Europe since ancient times, it still has the energy that comes from this confluence of cultures.

Fes el Bali

Stroll the narrow alleys and colourful souks of Morocco's oldest imperial capital, where traders ply their wares and donkeys deliver loads to shops as they've done for centuries.

Volubilis

See the impressive ruins of this 3rd c B.C.E. Mauritanian capital. The wealth garnered from its production of olive oil is still evident in its monumental buildings.

Amazing Landscapes

Enjoy a variety of landscapes from the Atlantic to the Sahara: from fertile plains behind Atlantic coast sand dunes to forested mountain ranges to to impressive desert oases protected by majestic kasbahs.

Chefchaouen



glamorous Hotel Continental and the house that belonged to Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton. The kasbah, at the top of the hill, houses a splendid museum in the former residence of the sultan. In the Ville Nouvelle we see the churchyard of St. Andrews Anglican Church, where several well-known expatriate Tangerinos are buried and the Café de Paris, famous rendezvous during the International Zone era. There is time to relax before enjoying dinner. Overnight Tangier (B, D)

Sunday 20 October Chefchaouen

Today we travel through the Rif to Chefchaouen, a picturesque walled town known for its blue-washed buildings with red-tiled roofs adorned with pots of flowers. We'll tour the compact medina and kasbah before we have lunch and check into our centrally located riad. The afternoon is free for relaxation and further exploration. Overnight Chefchaouen (B, L)

Chouara Tannery, Fes



Monday 21 October Fes el Bali

After a leisurely start, a drive through the lovely countryside takes us to the ancient Imperial capital of Fes el Bali. This afternoon we will take an orientation tour visiting Borj Sud, a 16th century fortress, and the Marinid Tombs dating from the 13th to 15th centuries. Both locations also afford panoramic view over the souks of Fes el Bali. Overnight Fes (B, L, D)

Tuesday 22 October Medina of Fes

Entering through the Bab Boujeloud gate in the old city walls, we begin our exploration of the Fes el Bali medina with a visit to the Medersa Bou Inania, an intricate masterpiece of Merenid architecture. We walk through the souk, with its shops and stalls selling foodstuffs, perfumes, hardware, clothing, shoes and slippers, silks, embroidery and spices, stopping to visit old fondouks, some of which are still used as warehouses and workshops by local artisans. We look around the area of the great Kairouine mosque and the fascinating tanneries that use age-old methods of treating and dyeing hides. Overnight Fes (B)

Wednesday 23 October Volubilis

This morning we drive from Fes to the archaeological site of Volubilis. Once capital of the Roman Province of Mauretania, its ruins are picturesquely located on a high ridge above a fertile valley. We'll walk past an industrial area, where several olive oil presses have been found, to the city centre with its forum, capitol and basilica and imposing triumphal arch. The streets beyond are lined with grand private houses, many of which still have their beautiful mosaic floors. Near the entrance is a museum with numerous finds from the site and excellent explanations. After our visit we return to Fes. Overnight Fes (B, L)



Volubilis

Marrakesh



Thursday 24 October

Musée du Batha

This morning we visit the Musée du Batha, a converted 19th century palace with pleasant gardens and an excellent collection of wood carving, metalwork, costumes and pottery. Stroll through the Jewish Mellah, where the old houses are distinguished by their wooden shutters and wood and wrought iron balconies. This afternoon there will be some free time before dinner. Overnight Fes (B, D)

Friday 25 October

To Marrakesh

We depart for the long drive to Marrakesh, stopping en route to have lunch and see examples of local carpet weaving. Overnight Marrakesh (B, L, D)

Saturday 26 October

Marrakesh Palaces and Souks

Our Marrakesh exploration begins at the 16th-century Sultan Ahmed el Mansour's marble and gilt Saadian tombs, and the Badi Palace with its sunken gardens and pavilion housing the original wooden minbar from the Koutoubia Mosque, a masterpiece of 12th-century Moorish art. Past the Jewish Mellah, we come to the Bahia palace, built in the 19th-century by a black slave who became grand vizier. A stroll through narrow streets and alleys brings us to the lively main square, overlooked by the Koutoubia minaret, one of the symbols of the city. After an independent lunch we explore the colourful souks north of the square and visit the Ben Youssef Medersa, an exquisite 14th-century Koranic school. We end our day at Le Jardin Secret, a restored 19th-century palace and garden. Overnight Marrakesh (B)

Sunday 27 October

Marrakesh Gardens and Art

This morning we travel a short distance outside Marrakesh to visit the modern sculpture exhibits of the Anima Garden, established by Viennese multi-media artist André Heller. Upon return we see the lovely Jardin Majorelle, designed by artists in the 1940s and bought by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé in 1980. We'll visit a small museum of Yves Saint Laurent's artwork and a Berber museum in Jacques Majorelle's former cubist painting studio. The afternoon is free for relaxation or further exploration. Overnight Marrakesh (B, D)

Monday 28 October

Ouarzazate

Today we enjoy spectacular scenery as we cross the High Atlas Mountains over the winding Tiz n'Tichka pass. We stop for lunch at Ait Benhaddou, where Gladiator starring Russell Crowe was filmed. The ksar or fortified old town, now largely abandoned but protected as a heritage site, is a striking example of southern Moroccan mudbrick architecture. We continue to Ouarzazate and the splendid Taourirt Kasbah, former residence of the pasha of Marrakesh, Thami el Glaoui, before checking into our hotel. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L, D)

HOTELS

Rabat, Hotel Rihab

(2 nights)

Tangier, Royal Tulip City Center

(2 nights)

Chefchaouen, Casa Hassan

(1 night)

Fes, Barceló Fès Medina

(4 nights)

Marrakesh, Radisson Blu Hotel

(3 nights)

Ouarzazate, Riad Dar Chamaa

(2 nights)

Taroudant, Dar Zitoune

(1 night)

Essaouira, Atlas Essaouira & Spa

(2 nights)

Casablanca, Hyatt Regency

(1 night)

WEATHER

Morocco's climate is very diverse, varying with the different regions throughout the country. The coastal regions have a Mediterranean climate; the interior features the Atlas Mountains and plateaus while the Southern regions see the Sahara Desert extend to the coast.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Three

This tour is among our most physically demanding. You should be able to comfortably participate in up to five to seven hours of physical activity per day, including walking at an easy to regular pace, sometimes on uneven terrain. You will also need to tolerate varying climatic conditions, such as humidity and heat, and tolerate a diet that can be significantly different from a typical Australian diet. For all fitness requirements to be met, please visit our website.

Tuesday 29 October

Drâa Valley

We spend a full day driving south along the Drâa Valley, part of the ancient trade route across the Sahara. The Drâa Valley is a long fertile strip dotted with date palm oases and fortified towns and villages. We will have time to stop and enjoy the scenery of green palmeries against the desert landscape. Our excursion will end at the village of Zagora, the traditional jumping-off point for caravans heading to Timbuktu. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L)

Wednesday 30 October

Taroudant

Today we make the beautiful drive to Taroudant, stopping for a late lunch at the Riad Hida in Ouled Berhil. On arrival in Taroudant, we'll stroll around the elegant little town with its circuit of warm reddish-brown walls, stopping at the Arab Souk for some shopping. Overnight Taroudant (B, L)

Thursday 31 October

Essaouira

Today we drive to the Atlantic coast and the harbour town of Essaouira with lunch en route. After checking into our hotel there is time to relax before we gather in the beachfront bar to watch the sun set into the Atlantic. Overnight Essaouira (B, L, D)

Friday 1 November

Essaouira

Our visit to Essaouira, an 18th-century town surrounded by impressive ramparts, begins at the harbour, where every morning the fishing boats bring in the catch to be sold at the nearby market. We walk along the ramparts by the Skala bastion for views across the ocean and stroll through the medina with its whitewashed houses, woodworkers' and jewellers' souks and former Jewish Mellah. The afternoon is at leisure. Overnight Essaouira (B)

Saturday 2 November

El Jadida and Casablanca

We depart Essaouira this morning via the scenic coastal road, stopping for lunch at El Jadida and its old Portuguese medina, a UNESCO World Heritage site. After lunch we walk along the ramparts and through the streets to see the Church of the Assumption and the minaret of the Grand Mosque, which once acted as a lighthouse. We continue to Casablanca where we gather in the evening for a farewell dinner. Overnight Casablanca (B, L, D)

Sunday 3 November

Depart Casablanca

The tour ends this morning after breakfast. (B)

ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email: jamal@academytravel.com.au

