



# ACADEMY TRAVEL

TAILORED  
SMALL GROUP  
JOURNEYS

Ben Youssef Madrasa,  
Marrakesh

# MOROCCO

## THE GRAND TOUR

### OVERVIEW

Discover the best of Morocco on this 20-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 unique 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, 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 18 - November 6, 2026**

### TOUR PRICE

**\$14,870** per person, twin share  
**\$2,970** 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

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

### INCLUSIONS

**19** nights' accommodation in centrally located 3 to 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 12 lunches and 10 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 6.00pm on Sunday 18 October, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca.

The tour ends after breakfast on Friday 6 November, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

### Sunday 18 October

#### Arrive Casablanca

Individual transfers from Casablanca International Airport to the hotel in Casablanca will be arranged by Academy Travel. In the early evening we meet for introductions and a welcome drink in the lobby of the hotel, before enjoying dinner together. Overnight Casablanca (D)

### Monday 19 October

#### Rabat

Today we make our way to the imperial city of Rabat, Morocco's coastal capital and our base for the next two nights. Before departing, we enjoy a brief tour of Casablanca, taking in the kilometres-long seafront promenade and the opulent Hassan II mosque, set on an outcrop jutting over the ocean. We'll arrive in Rabat by the early afternoon, taking an orientation tour by coach before checking in to our hotel. This evening we enjoy a welcome dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Rabat (B, D)

### Tuesday 20 October

#### Rabat

Today begins with a visit to the archaeological site of Chellah – a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a footprint almost five times that of Pompeii. Once a Roman trading post, it was later used as a royal burial ground by 13th and 14th-century dynastic rulers. We then make our way to the Hassan Tower complex, where we find the peculiar 13th-century half-finished red stone minaret (intended to be the largest in the world) and the much more modern Mausoleum of Mohammed V, built during the 1960s. The Mausoleum is glaringly white in comparison to its ancient surroundings, featuring delicate symmetrical carvings, slender porticos and an emerald zellige tiled roof. We pause for lunch together before continuing to the Archaeological Museum, home to a magnificent collection of Roman bronzes, and the Kasbah des Oudaias, with its 12th-century fortifications, Andalusian garden, charming whitewashed houses and view. On return to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Rabat (B, L)

## 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.

### Tangier

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-century BCE 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 impressive desert oases protected by majestic kasbahs.



Mohammed V Mausoleum, Rabat



Rabat



Chefchaouen

## Wednesday 21 October

### Lixus & Tangier

Departing Rabat this morning, our journey takes us north along the coast to Tangier, situated around 30km from Spain on the tip of North Africa. En route, 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. As we make our way to the acropolis we'll see the public baths and the amphitheatre that once staged wild beast shows and gladiatorial contests. Lunch is then enjoyed at a restaurant by the sea before we continue to Tangier, checking in to our hotel or arrival. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Tangier (B, L)

## Thursday 22 October

### Tangier

A gateway between Africa and Europe, Tangier 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 of his life in the city. A walk through the medina's streets will take us past the once-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, a famous rendezvous during the International Zone era. There is time to freshen up back at our hotel before dinner tonight at Villa Joséphine, an exquisite old colonial house located above the city in the well-to-do Vielle Montagne neighbourhood. Overnight Tangier (B, D)

## Friday 23 October

### Chefchaouen

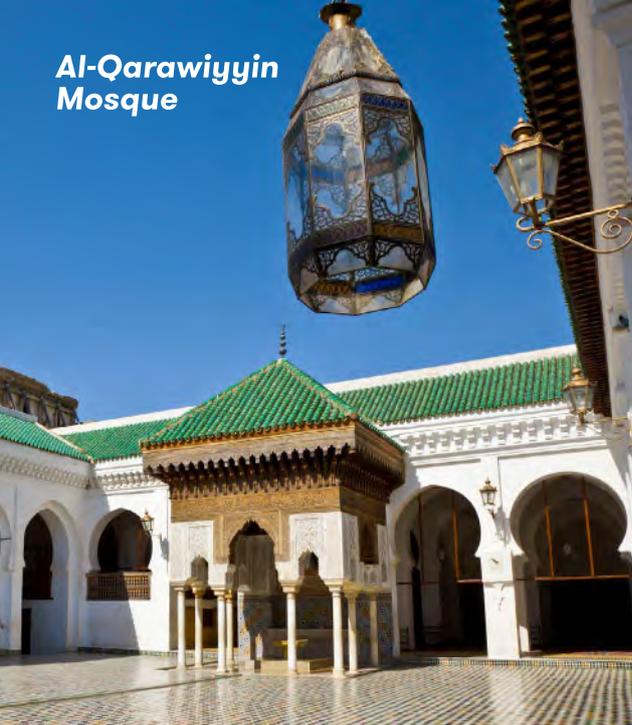
Our journey continues south as we travel through the Rif Mountains to Chefchaouen, a picturesque walled town known for its blue-washed buildings with red-tiled roofs adorned with pots of flowers. On arrival we'll enjoy a lunch of exquisite Moroccan flavours before exploring the compact medina and majestic Kasbah, which dates back to the 15th century. We end the day checking in to our centrally located riad, with the remainder of the day free for relaxation and further exploration. Overnight Chefchaouen (B, L)

## Saturday 24 October

### Fes

After a leisurely start to the day, a drive through the lovely countryside brings us to the ancient Imperial capital of Fes, founded in the 9th century and the capital of Morocco for hundreds of years. We begin our visit with lunch in a traditional Ryad, before a walk through the lush gardens of Jnan Sbil takes us into the city's historic Jewish quarter,

## Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque



Chouara Tannery, Fes



Volubilis

known as the Mellah. Dating back to 1438, today the Mellah is supported by UNESCO and only a small Jewish population remains. Our walk takes in the restored 17th-century Ibn Danan synagogue and the arresting Jewish Cemetery, with 400 year-old tombstones. This evening there is a talk in the hotel, followed by dinner. Overnight Fes (B, L, D)

### Sunday 25 October

#### Fes el Bali

The 1200-year old walled medina of Fes, known as Fes el Bali, holds a small universe of cobbled alleyways (9,454 to be precise), historic madrasas and traditional souks. Our exploration of this ancient quarter begins at the monumental Bab Bou Jeloud city gate, built by the French colonial administration in 1913 to serve as the grand entrance to the old city. 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. Our visit here also takes in the Medersa Bou Inania, an intricate masterpiece of Merenid architecture, the colourful Chouara Tannery, operating since at least the 16th century, and the beautiful Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque, which houses one of the oldest universities in the world. Lunch is enjoyed inside the medina before an afternoon at leisure. Overnight Fes (B, L)

### Monday 26 October

#### Volubilis

This morning our coach brings to Volubilis – the remains of one of the Roman Empire’s key Moroccan cities. It was once the capital of the Roman Province of Mauretania and today its ruins are picturesquely located on a high ridge above a fertile valley. On arrival 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. At the height of the Empire, 20,000 Volubilitani would have walked these cobblestone streets. The streets beyond are lined with grand private houses, many of which still have their beautiful mosaic floors. In the afternoon we return to Fes via the former imperial capital of Meknes, originally a small market town that took a dramatic turn when Sultan Moulay Ismail assumed power in the 17th century. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Fes (B, L)

### Tuesday 27 October

#### Musée du Batha

Our day starts with a visit to Musée du Batha, a converted 19th-century palace which has been a museum since 1915. The collection focuses on traditional Moroccan arts and crafts salvaged from the medina’s ruined properties, including beautiful examples of woodcarving and zellige tilework and tadelakt. But the true highlight is the Fes pottery, some almost seven centuries old and displaying the city’s

## Marrakesh



signature cobalt-blue designs – a technique developed here in the 10th century. Afterwards, we stroll through the Jewish Mellah, where the old houses are distinguished by their wooden shutters and wood and wrought iron balconies. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure before we reconvene for dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Fes (B, D)

### Wednesday 28 October

#### To Marrakesh

Today is a travel day, departing for the long drive to Marrakesh. We stop enroute to have lunch and see examples of local carpet weaving in Boujad before continuing the journey in the afternoon. After checking into our hotel with time to freshen up, we enjoy a dinner of inventive Moroccan cuisine in one of the city's best restaurants. Overnight Marrakesh (B, L, D)

### Thursday 29 October

#### Marrakesh Palaces and Souks

Dating back in parts to the 11th century, the medina of Marrakesh forms the heart of Morocco's onetime capital. Our morning walking tour through its labyrinthine streets brings us to the lively Jemaa El Fnaa (main square), overlooked by the 12th-century Koutoubia Mosque – a masterpiece of Moorish art, whose minaret stands guard over the old city and has provided architectural inspiration around the world. We also visit the El Badi Palace with its sunken gardens and pavilion housing the original wooden minbar from the Koutoubia Mosque, and the lavish 16th-century Saadian tombs, sealed up for centuries until their rediscovery in 1917. After lunch together in the medina, we explore the colourful souks north of the square and end the day with a visit to the Ben Youssef Medersa, a ravishingly exquisite Koranic school built in the 14th century. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Marrakesh (B, L)



Ben Youssef Medersa

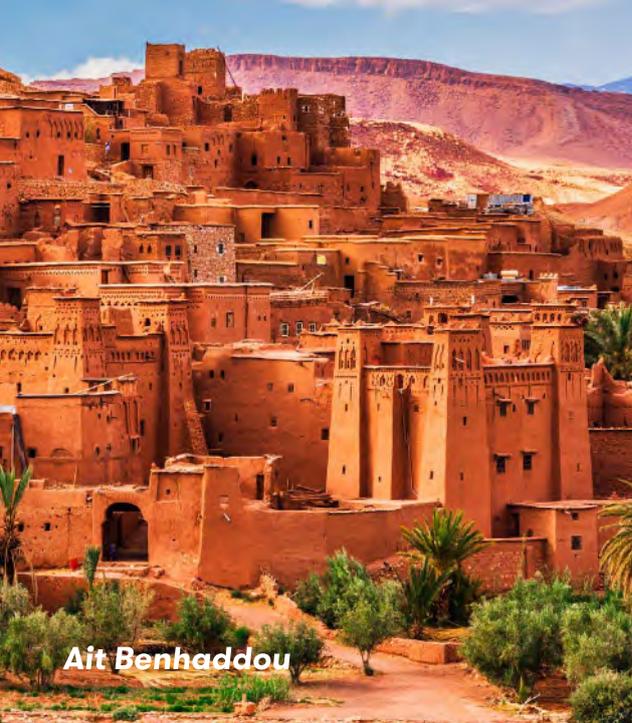
### Friday 30 October

#### Marrakesh Gardens and Art

This morning we travel a short distance outside Marrakesh to tour the modern sculpture exhibits of the Anima Garden, established by Viennese multi-media artist André Heller. Upon our return we visit the exotic Jardin Majorelle, designed by artists in the 1940s and bought by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé in 1980. The signature cobalt blue (now called Majorelle blue) pops in this oasis of bubbling fountains, luxuriant growth and vibrant colours. Majorelle's studio now houses the Museum of Berber Arts, where we find Yves and Pierre's collection of carpets, ceramics, jewellery, textiles and other treasures. We end our day at Le Jardin Secret, hidden behind 30 foot walls on Rue Mouassine, with a traditional Islamic garden fed by a restored original khattara (underground irrigation system). Dinner this evening is in one of Marrakesh's excellent restaurants. Overnight Marrakesh (B, D)



Jardin Majorelle



Ait Benhaddou



Taznakht Rug



Essaouira

## Saturday 31 October

### Ouarzazate

Departing Marrakesh for Ouarzazate today, we enjoy spectacular scenery as we cross the High Atlas Mountains over the winding Tiz n'Tichka pass. We stop for lunch en route at Ait Benhaddou, where the movie *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 in the afternoon, with a visit to the UNESCO World-Heritage site of Kasbah of Taourirt on arrival. This magnificent example of traditional Berber architecture has existed since the 12th century and was also the former residence of Pasha el Glaoui. This evening we enjoy a talk in our hotel, followed by dinner. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L, D)

## Sunday 1 November

### Kasbah Amridil and Atlas Studios

We begin the day with a visit to Kasbah Amridil, an ancient fortification nestled in the date palms of the small village of Skoura. Founded at the end of the 17th century by the Nassiri family, who still maintain it to this day, it is now a living museum showcasing traditional kasbah life over the centuries. Largely unchanged in over 300 years, the houses, streets and Kasbah walls have been well-maintained. Returning to Ouarzazate for lunch, our afternoon is then spent at the Atlas Film Studios – affectionately known as the “Hollywood of Morocco”. Our guided visit will take in the backstage areas as we learn about the evolution in construction methods over time. This evening we enjoy dinner in our hotel. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L, D)

## Monday 2 November

### Agadir

Our journey continues today as we make the beautiful drive to the coastal city of Agadir, situated at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. Enroute (if time permits) we stop in the small town of Taznakht, where Berber women have been cultivating the art of rug making for generations, and the village of Talioine, famous for its excellent saffron. On arrival in Agadir, we stroll around this tranquil town before checking into our hotel with time to freshen up before we reconvene for dinner. Overnight Agadir (B, D)

## Tuesday 3 November

### Essaouira

This morning is spent exploring Souk El Had, one of the largest and most vibrant souks in Morocco with around 6,000 stalls. Lunch is enjoyed in town before departing for the harbour town of Essaouira, and enroute we stop at the Marjana Cooperative, established to empower local rural women, where we learn about the traditional production of argan oil. There is time to relax on arrival in Essaouira, gathering in the evening at the beachfront bar to watch the sun set into the Atlantic before our dinner together. Overnight Essaouira (B, L, D)

## HOTELS

### Casablanca, Hyatt Regency

(2 nights, total)

[www.hyatt.com](http://www.hyatt.com)

### Rabat, Marriott Hotel

(2 nights)

[www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

### Tangier, Barceló Tanger

(2 nights)

[www.barcelo.com](http://www.barcelo.com)

### Chefchaouen, Taj Chefchaouen

(1 night)

[taj-chefchaouen.com](http://taj-chefchaouen.com)

### Fes, Marriott Hotel Jnan Palace

(4 nights)

[www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

### Marrakesh, Sofitel Palais Imperial

(3 nights)

[sofitel.accor.com](http://sofitel.accor.com)

### Ouarzazate, Berbere Palace

(2 nights)

[www.berberepalace.com](http://www.berberepalace.com)

### Agadir The View Hotel

(1 night)

[theviewhotels.com](http://theviewhotels.com)

### Essaouira, Le Médina MGallery

(2 nights)

[all.accor.com](http://all.accor.com)

## 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. For all fitness requirements, please visit our website:

[www.academytravel.com.au](http://www.academytravel.com.au)



## Wednesday 4 November

### Essaouira

Centuries of cultural exchange have made Essaouira a haven for lovers of food, music and design, with Portuguese, French and Berber architecture framing its maze-like streets. Surrounded by impressive ramparts, our morning tour 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 until we reach the former Jewish Mellah. The afternoon is at leisure before we reconvene for a talk in our hotel. Overnight Essaouira (B)

## Thursday 5 November

### El Jadida and Casablanca

Returning to Casablanca today, we travel 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 again in the evening for our farewell dinner. Overnight Casablanca (B, L, D)

## Friday 6 November

### Depart Casablanca

The tour ends this morning after breakfast. We then transfer by coach to Casablanca International Airport, arriving in time for departing flights. (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:

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