

**Jewels of Morocco****12 days/ 11 nights****Marrakech, Skoura, Dades, Tinghir, Merzouga, Khamlia, Alnif, Tazarine, Zagora, Akka N'ait Sidi,  
Tata, Issafen, Tafraout, Igherm, Taroudant, Agadir, Essaouira  
Discovery, Culture, History****Day 1: Marrakech**

On your arrival in Marrakech airport (RAK) our representative will greet you and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to settle in, relax after your flight, and have a first look around. Enjoy your welcome dinner at the hotel. If you arrive early enough, you can head into Marrakech's famous Djemaa el Fna Square on your own for a first taste of Moroccan food at one of the main street stalls, while watching the many street performers and salesmen offering their wares. [D]

**Day 2: Marrakech**

After breakfast, enjoy a full day exploration of Marrakesh. We start at Djemaa el Fna, the central square and Marrakesh's heartbeat surrounded by bazaars, mosques, terraced cafes, snake charmers, fire-eaters, and fortune-tellers. After the visit, we stop at the Koutoubia Minaret, the oldest of the three great Almohad towers, and the Bahia Palace, a marvelous display of painted wood, ceramics, and symmetrical gardens. We then proceed to Tiskiwin museum which houses an impressive collection of North African arts and crafts. The museum, which was founded by a Dutch anthropologist, is organized into geographically themed exhibits, with each room focusing on artifacts from different towns and regions along the ancient trade route from Marrakech to Timbuktu. The works on display include exquisite hand-woven carpets and textiles, traditional Berber clothing and jewelry, intricate basketwork and tribal handicrafts. Later enjoy a tour by a walk through the old medina and the labyrinth of souks. Overnight in the Marrakech. [B]

**Day 3: Marrakech, Skoura, Dades**

As you leave Marrakech, the distant haze begins to resolve itself into a jagged mountain range - the High Atlas Mountains, jutting abruptly from the plain. Our route follows the same one caravans used centuries ago, to bring into Marrakech gold and precious wood from the other side of the ocean of sand, the Sahara. Beautiful scenery and small villages built in tiers succeed among oak trees, walnut groves and snow patches before arriving at the Tizi n Tichka pass, at 2260 meters high. Once over the pass a totally different picture is unveiled: the lunar landscape of the Anti-Atlas. Later, skirt past Ouarzazate and stop for a lunch (own expense). Past Ouarzazate, our trip tour reaches yet another lush area, nestled between the deserted crest and the desolate plateaus: Skoura palm grove. Then, our trip reaches Kelaa des Mgouna, famous for the nearby Valley of Roses and 'Rose Festival', where at the end of a 3-day celebration usually held in May, a local girl is crowned 'Rose Queen'. The most looked after product is eau-de-rose and two factories in the area distil and export the product. The process uses approximately three thousand kilograms of rose petals to extract a liter of rose oil. Further on, Boulmane Dades follows, the starting point to explore the spectacular Dades Gorge, a lush carpet set against the massive rocks and quite popular among those interested to trek. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [[B/D]

**Day 4: Dades, Tinghir, Merzouga**

Back on the road, our first stop is Tinerhir (Tinghir), with its extensive palm grove, the ksours built into the rocky hills above it and its mysterious decaying Jewish quarter. Tinghir has been for generations a stop for nomadic Berber tribes travelling from the mountains north of it towards the desert during the winter months. A rather inconspicuous hidden gem is the 19th century adobe mosque nested within the old crumbling ksour, a heaven for photography enthusiasts. Todra Gorges, lie only 15 km from Tinghir, presenting an arresting spectacle with its crystal-clear river emerging from it, its huge walls changing color to magical effect as the day unfolds. Its 300 meters (1000 feet) high walls are home to more than 150 bolted routes and at any time of day you can catch a glimpse of someone rock climbing his way up the gigantic walls. Before reaching Merzouga where the tarmac ends, we pass Erfoud and Rissani. In Erfoud we may stop for a visit at Musee des Oasis if time allows. Rissani used to

serve as last stop on the great caravan routes south and gold and slave auctions were taking place here as late as 1800's. Drive to the desert camp. Upon arrival, you will witness the sunset from over the desert dunes and be astounded by the peace and calm as well as the changing colors of the landscape. Here a sunset camel ride is included plus a walk to the top of some of the dunes for spectacular views as the sun sinks below the horizon. You'll enjoy a hearty Bedouin meal and a campfire this evening, often with local musicians helping enhance the atmosphere, before sleeping in comfortable Berber camel-hair tents. [B/D]

#### **Day 5: Merzouga (Khamlia)**

After breakfast, your driver (s) will be waiting for you to continue your adventure by heading towards the villages in the surroundings area for a closer contact with the Berber culture, before arrival to Rissani, visit of camel milk cooperative, then continue to Rissani and visit one of the best traditional market in Sahara, "a place where they sell just donkeys and other markets for sheep, goats and cows. Stop at El Khamlia village for lunch included. Continue to the African village or "Gnawa village". This evening, get onto the back of a camel and venture into the desert for a chance to see one of the most beautiful sunsets of your lifetime. Traverse the golden sands of the Sahara until you reach a perfect viewing spot for one of the Nature's greatest shows. As another day comes to an end, watch the sky come to life with a fiery glow and the rays playfully change the colors of the endless dunes around you. Enjoy your dinner under tent then overnight. [B/L/D]

#### **Day 6: Merzouga, Alnif, Tazarine, Zagora**

Enjoy an optional sunrise camel ride along the golden sand dunes in Merzouga. Return to your Riad for breakfast before transferring to Zagora via the Amazigh villages of Alnif and Tazarine. The road to Tazarine sees almost no traffic, providing a scenic link between Tafilalet and Draa Valley. Aside from the landscape, fossils and prehistoric rock carvings are this region's main attraction. The scenery grows wilder as you approach Tazarine, set in a grassy oasis surrounded by bare mountains. Continue to Zagora. Famous for its largest palm valley in Morocco. Dinner and overnight in your hotel. [B/D]

#### **Day 7: Zagora, Akka N'ait Sidi, Tata**

In the morning have breakfast and start an interesting journey filled with beautiful places to visit and explore, visit the caves or trek by the cliffs. Maybe a Picnic in the nearby palm grove to then reach a very old Berber village where you will be able to push the gate of an 18th century old granary, recently restored. Inside the palm grove an unfinished mosque from centuries ago stands as a silent guard. Lunch in Tata (own expenses), at the foot of Jebel Bani, situated on the Saharan plain, Tata was an oasis settlement along the trade route from West Africa. Its name, which roughly means 'take a break' in Berber language, recalls those days of Saharan caravans. Dinner and overnight at your hotel. [B/D]

#### **Day 8: Tata, Issafen, Tafraout**

After breakfast, continue the trip via Ballou, Tizgui and Khemis Issafn. Drive south out of Issafen towards Tafraoute, the Anti-Atlas Mountains are beautiful in a different way from the High Atlas. The agricultural terrain is much more open here, and often you can see for miles across the undulating mountains. Argan and almond trees clutter the hillsides giving a welcome splash of color to an otherwise red and rocky landscape. The road then slowly snaked along the barren hills, inching its way towards Tafraoute. It is a quietly colorful little town also a home to some wonderful rock formations. This hard-to-reach town is one of Morocco most relaxing destinations and the perfect base to explore the Anti-Atlas region. Enjoy your dinner at the hotel and overnight. [B/D]

#### **Day 9: Tafraout, Igherm, Taroudant**

After breakfast, Tafraout is an ancient settlement in the rocky Anti-Atlas region in southern Morocco. Enjoy the rose-granite mountain scenery, palm groves, Argan forest, fortified Kasbahs and traditional Amazigh (Berber) villages. Tafraoute is the official almond capital of Morocco. The main attractions that will be visited: Les Pierres Bleues, which is Jean Veran's famous Blue Rock and the gazelle rock carving. The natural beauty surrounding Tafraoute is simply astounding -it would be a shame not to get wonderfully lost as you discover it. A drive around Amlen Valley, where Tafraoute is nestled, can

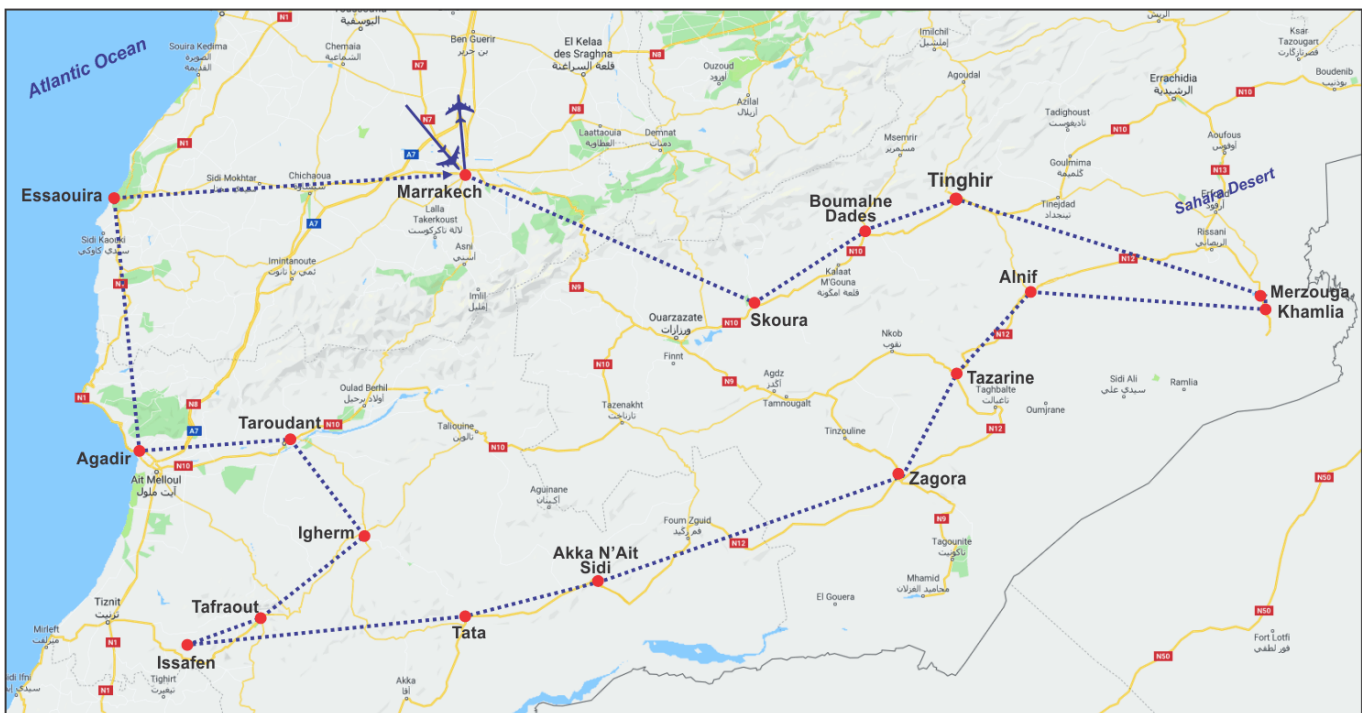
take you to a host of different places including the charming Berber villages of Oumesnat and Emintizket. Check out the unique rock formations, and Agadir's (hilltop granaries) in the villages of Amtoudi and Ikouka. Later, we drive towards Taroudant. The landscape becomes very dry, punctuated with some small Oasis, with succeeding mountains in the background, the route then goes up to arrive in the tranquil town of Igherm to then descend on Taroudant and its fertile plains, the snowy peaks of the High Atlas in the background. Also called sometimes 'Small Marrakech' Taroudant is in fact older than its northern sister. Its walls were built by the Saadi sultans back in 16th century when the city was their capital and the main base to attack Portuguese invaders on the nearby Atlantic coast. Dinner and overnight at Taroudant. [B/D]

**Day 10: Taroudant, Agadir, Essaouira**

After breakfast, free time in this quiet town where most folks go around on their bicycle, hop on a caliche and have a tour around the city walls or wander the souks best known for silver, honey and Argan outcross the city's characteristic ramparts to begin touring the souks where some of Morocco's most talented craftsmen tend their art. We head to the coast today with our first stop at Morocco's main resort town of Agadir where you may enjoy an optional lunch near the beach. We'll take a short tour of the harbor and the famous High Kasbah, destroyed by the earthquake of 1960 then visit the bird's valley then leave to Essaouira along the Atlantic coast. Optional lunch in a local restaurant. Overnight in Essaouira. [B]

**Day 11: Essaouira, Marrakech**

Enjoy most of the morning visiting this relatively small, easily navigable city. Essaouira has no world-renowned mosque or enormous mosaic door; it's a beach town, albeit a culturally dense one. In the way of high-profile attractions, it's got a brilliant medina—named a world heritage site by UNESCO—ramparts, a Jewish cemetery, a Kasbah, a citadel, and a bust of Orson Welles. The real sites in Essaouira are the beaches, the port, and the market. Rather than shopping, some people choose to windsurf on the ocean, while others opt for a camel ride along the beach. In either case, make sure not to miss the art galleries, cooperatives, and workshops, of which there are plenty throughout the city. Departure to Les Domaines du Val d'Argan some 12 miles on the way to Marrakech, the smallest winery in Morocco, enjoy your lunch and wine tasting before we stop at a woman Argan cooperative where we



witness how they produce Argan oil and its beauty products before continuing to Marrakech on the way will make a brief stop to see some goats climbing the Argan oil. Relax and freshen up, in the evening, drive to a local restaurant and enjoy your farewell dinner. Drive back to the hotel and overnight. [B/L]

**Day 12: Marrakech, USA**

We will assist you to Marrakech airport for your return flight. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [D] = Dinner | [B/L] = Breakfast and Lunch | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner | [B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**You Tour includes:**

- Arrival and departure transfers
- 11 nights' accommodation
  - Marrakech 3 nights
  - Dades 1 night
  - Merzouga 2 nights
  - Zagora 1 night
  - Tata 1 night
  - Tafraout 1 night
  - Taroudant 1 night
  - Essaouira 1 night
- Meals
  - Breakfast daily
  - 1 lunch
  - Welcome dinner in Marrakech
  - 6 dinners
  - Farewell dinner at a local restaurant in Marrakech

- Khamlia excursion
- Camel ride at the desert
- Guided city tour of Marrakech
- Entrance fees at sites as per program
- Modern 4x4 vehicles with English speaking drivers throughout the tour
- Porterage at the airports
- Taxes

**Tour does not include:**

- International airline tickets
- Taxes or surcharges related to airline tickets
- Travel insurance
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Other meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Extras and gratuities
- Early check-in, late check-out

**Hotels in your Tour:**

City	Hotel Name	Tripadvisor
Marrakech	Riad Slitine	4.5
Dades	Xaluca Dades	4.5
Merzouga	Madu Camp	5
Zagora	Riad Lamane	4
Tata	Dar Infiane	3.5
Tafraout	Les Amendiers	3.5
Taroudant	Dar Hossoun	5
Essaouira	Dar L'Oussia	4.5

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

**Tour Prices:**

No. of Pax	Double	Single
2	\$3,385	\$4,449
3	\$2,865	\$3,929
4	\$2,599	\$3,665
5	\$3,009	\$4,079
6	\$2,809	\$3,879
7	\$2,665	\$3,729
8	\$2,569	\$3,639
9	\$2,809	\$3,879
10	\$2,705	\$3,769

Prices are per person and may change without notice. Minimum 2 people

**Tour Code:** MA06RAK20CV