



# Morocco Explorer

9 Days



## Day 1 | Marrakech

### Let the Adventure Begin

Our journey begins with a warm welcome at Marrakesh Menara Airport (RAK). There is a private transfer to our first night accommodation. Please arrive any time today, before dinner.

In the late afternoon, we meet our local guide and head out for a walking tour along the winding, warren-like streets of the medina then to the grand square of Jemaa el-Fnaa. It's one of the largest public spaces in the world and as night falls, the square transforms into a hive of activity. Henna artists, performers, storytellers and street food vendors converge.

This evening, we join a Marrakchi family in their home for a shared meal of just-baked bread, Zaalouk (a classic eggplant and tomato dish), Moroccan salad, local vegetables and meat. We'll soon learn the rhythms of etiquette and how to properly enjoy a meal, using torn bits of bread to dip in the sauces. This experience is an opportunity to engage with locals, taste Morocco's rich flavors and learn of the city's history.

After our fragrant and filling dinner, we are joined by a local female henna tattoo artist, who teaches us about henna's origins and symbolism, and then it's time to choose a design for our own hands. Mesmerized by the henna ink, the unfamiliar sounds and spices, we soon find rest in our Riad and dream of the adventures to come.

### Included Meals

Dinner

## Accommodations

Riad la Clé D'or or similar



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## Day 2 | The Tizi n`Tichka

### Rock the Kasbah

After breakfast, we follow the twists and turns of the road over the High Atlas mountain range, stopping for lunch en route. The Tizi n`Tichka is the highest paved mountain pass in Morocco at a dizzying 7,234 feet (2,205 m). This is the gateway and former caravan route to the Sahara desert!

We soon descend into the remains of Ait Benhaddou, an 11th-century ruin of earthen clay architecture known as an *ighrem* (fortified village), and designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987.

At the top of the Kasbah (castle-like fortification), we're treated to an impressive panoramic view of the surrounding villages and distant desert.

Once we check into our hotel, we have the remainder of the day free to explore, drink fortifying mint tea and chat about our day, journal and/or absorb our surreal surroundings.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Hotel Ksar Ighanda or similar



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## Day 3 | Ouarzazate, Agdz and Zagora

### Following the Caravan Route

After breakfast, we visit the nearby city Ouarzazate, south of the High Atlas mountains. It has been dubbed the “door of the desert” and more recently Morocco’s “Little Hollywood.” Passing by mudbrick kasbahs, we enter the tiny oasis town of Agdz. Here, the Draa river and extensive palm trees are a startling contrast to the desert’s sugar-brown palette. Fittingly, Agdz means “resting place” and it was a vital stop on the trade caravan route to Timbuktu.

We continue on to Zagora, a small oasis town on the Sahara fringe in the Draa River valley, where we’ll spend the night. On arrival, we can take a slow walk through the palm groves and explore the ksars and countryside. While the Draa River is Morocco’s longest, snaking over 683 miles (1,100 km), it’s sometimes bone dry. The hot and dry climate of this region is favored by date

growers: over 30 varieties are grown here and are harvested from September to November. Zagora is renowned for having the best dates in the country—date night, anyone?

Zagora is full of surprises from its Dinosaur Park (several fossils and remains have been found here), watermelon production and street art by local youth who were encouraged to paint residential neighborhoods.

### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch (on the road) and dinner

### **Accommodations**

Dar Hnini or similar



# Day 4 | Erg Chegaga Dunes

## Ceramics and Camel Rides

Today we drive along the rugged and desolate Acacus mountains (also known as the Jbel Tadrart ranges), through vast seas of sand and the occasional verdant desert oasis of date palms to the old village of Tamegroute. Tamegroute is known by potters for its signature green ceramic art. The glaze intensity and combination of manganese, silicon, 1% copper and Draa riverbed clay creates the characteristic moody green color.

Depending on the library schedule and opening times, we may be able to visit the Tamegroute Koranic Library, which has an impressive inventory of ancient scientific and literary scripts, the Koran and stories of the prophet Mohammed.

Next, we jump in 4X4 vehicles to access the impressive Erg Chegaga dunes. Upon arrival at the wind-sculpted dunes, we ditch the 4WD for a different style of all-terrain vehicle: camels! We ride these swaying “ships of the desert” to the closest dunes to take in a very memorable sunset together. Be sure to take a moment to listen to the sheer silence of the Sahara—it’s a rare moment.

Tonight, we sleep in true caravan route style (with a few more amenities) in luxury canvas tents. And yes, there is a private toilet (an eco-friendly one to boot!) in each tent.

### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch (on the road) and dinner

### **Accommodations**

Azalai Camp or similar



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## Day 5 | Oulad Berhil

### Argan Trees

This morning, we travel to the market town of Oulad Berhil in the valley of the Sous river. The journey is long (but rewarding!), so stretch those hamstrings! It should take approximately 8 hours, with the first three hours in 4x4s until we transfer back to our van once we reach the paved road. We stop several times along the way, passing through endless desert scenery and a protected reserve for the ancient argan trees. The Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve stretches over an impressive 2,560,000 hectares.

These gnarly, thorny trees can live up to 200 years and are one of few species that can survive the relentless desert temps that can reach over 122°F (50°C). The trees are vital to locals as they provide fruit, fuel, cosmetics, medicine and the popular antioxidant and moisturizer, argan oil. In this area, Barbary sheep herding, agriculture and argan oil production are a lifeline.

If we're lucky, we may come across the curious sight of goats climbing the argan trees in search of fruit. Fruit collection is controlled by law and dictated by village traditions. The "nuts" are gathered after fruit consumption by the ruminating goats (who spit them out, in case you are wondering about the expulsion process). The goats are free to come and go from the trees as

they please, so we may also see them snacking on the argan fruits from the ground, depending on their mood.

Once we reach Oulad Berhil, we check into our accommodation and simply relax and reflect after a long day of travel and goat-searching!

### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### **Accommodations**

Riad Tafilag or similar



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## Day 6 | Imlil

### Mountain Views

We make a beeline to Toubkal National Park this morning. Mount Toubkal is the pinnacle of the park, attracting hikers and climbers from around the world who are eager to bag the tallest mountain in North Africa. Jebel Toubkal is 13,671 feet (4,167 m).

Our itinerary includes a short walk through the peaceful Berber village of Imlil. Our luggage is transported by mule and we can stretch our legs after the long drive on a short, uphill walk through the peaceful village to our accommodations, which are only accessible only by foot or mule hooves.

After checking into our hotel, we have the rest of the day to absorb the High Atlas mountain range views and explore the apple and walnut groves that surround us.

There is a nearby waterfall (one hour walk) for those who are eager to explore the Imlil Cascades, but please be aware that the walk is steep! Our guide can provide more information and direction on this option. You can also relax and recline poolside! Please note: Women are asked to dress modestly with a one-piece swimsuit in the hotel pool.

In the evening, we gather for an authentic dinner together.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Riad Jnane Imlil





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# Day 7 | Imlil Continued

## Rise and Shrine

Today we're on the move, on foot, with a guided walking tour that takes us through the town of Imlil to the shrine of Sidi Chamharouch.

This optional hike is 7.5 miles (12 km) with a 1,312 foot (400 m) (1,312ft) gain and 1,312 foot (400 m) loss upon return. Please note that the trail is single-track and extremely rocky with some open cliffside exposure and a strong likelihood of meeting passing mules (and other hikers).

For those who prefer a more leisurely hike, we can meet the group for lunch in Aroumd, which is approximately a 45 minute walk (uphill) from our accommodation.

After our savory local lunch, we return to our hotel and make the most of our free time for the rest of the day.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Riad Jnane Imlil



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## Day 8 | Marrakech

### The Marvels of the Ancient City

We drive back to Marrakech this morning after breakfast. After checking into our hotel, we meet our local guide for a walking tour to unearth the mysteries of ancient Marrakech. Get ready for a drastic change of pace from the rugged mountains—prepare to elbow your way through locals rushing by in the labyrinthine alleys. The sounds and aromas amplify the bustling souks of the medieval medina. It's a fun sensory overload of aggressive shouting, boisterous songs, donkeys pulling carts, booming call to prayer summons and backfiring motorcycles.

Lose yourself in the artful pyramids of fragrant exotic spices, the Berber carpet displays, stalls with wood carving and leatherware, colorful pottery and shops aglow with lanterns.

Our guide invites us deep into the history of Marrakech by way of Bahia Palace and the iconic Koutoubia Mosque. Construction of the largest mosque in Marrakech began in the 12th century, taking three successive caliphs (Muslim rulers/successors) for the mosque to reach completion. Its 226 foot (69 m) Moorish minaret, vast temple and gardens surrounding the fountain are remarkable.

We find lunch on the road or pick up something to go from the medina, depending on timing.

In the evening, we enjoy a farewell dinner at Nomad, a modern Moroccan restaurant in the medina, which offers a hyper local traditional and international menu.

#### **Included Meals**

Breakfast and dinner

#### **Accommodations**

Riad la Clé d'or or similar



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## Day 9 | Departure

### Farewell for Now

After a sensational Sahara sunrise, we travel by 4WD across the desert to Todra Gorges. This This morning, sigh, our caravan route comes to an end! After breakfast, we transfer to the Marrakech Menara Airport (RAK). Swap contact info, trip pics and big hugs with your Wild Women crew until next time!

#### Included Meals

Breakfast



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## Trip Details

### Know Before You Go

For all of the logistical details you'll need to know prior to departure—including the packing list, arrival and departure details and suggested tipping information, click [HERE](#).

Itinerary version as of Aug 16, 2024.