

Magical Morocco

A SMALL GROUP CULTURAL JOURNEY

June 12 - 21, 2014

Join us for a journey especially crafted to get to know the friendly people of Morocco and delve deeper into the culture and traditions of this fascinating country. We'll be able to get a sense of how the people live and how history and geography play a part in their lives. This small group tour (maximum 10 people) has been tailor made for Unique Backroad Journeys. With this deeper, more meaningful travel experience, you are certain to have memories for a lifetime.

I have enjoyed three wonderful trips with Debbie (Unique Backroad Journeys) and can't wait until another one. Great opportunity to see charming places that you would miss on a big tour or cruise. Less moving around changing hotels & best of all Debbie speaks French & Italian! I highly recommend her trips. Judy L. Roswell, GA



Day 1 – June 12, 2014

A private minibus will pick you up in Casablanca and take you to Marrakesh, one of the North Africa's most enchanting cities. You will check into your riad in **Mouassine**, the oldest and most traditional neighborhood of Marrakesh, and will have the remainder of the day to refresh and relax at your accommodation – as well as explore the surrounding area. You'll find restaurants, shops, spas, and museums, all on your doorstep.

Just a four-minute walk from your riad is **Jma el Fna**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This huge central plaza comes alive at night with the sounds of storytellers, acrobats, snake charmers, and musicians. Soak up the atmosphere and sample some of the exotic foods for sale. Then sit on the fringes of Jma el Fna with an energizing 'thé à la menthe' (mint tea), the native beverage of choice, and toast your arrival in this beautiful country.

Meals: (D)

Day 2 – June, 13, 2014

During your second day in Marrakesh, you will delve deeper into the fabric of the city with a guided tour of its spectacular ancient medina. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site, replete with grand entrances, mosques, battlements, and gardens. The medina of Marrakesh was founded by the Almoravids between 1070 and 1072 and for centuries this area played a central role in the country's culture, economy and politics. A private guide will lead you through the labyrinthine network of souks, where you'll encounter the rich aroma of spices and herbs, and have the chance to peruse a cornucopia of local handicrafts and treasures. If you are looking for souvenirs and gifts, your guide will point out some of the best stalls, and teach you how to hone your haggling technique. (It's all part of the experience!)

When you have sated your appetite for shopping, it's time to see some of Marrakesh's renowned historical highlights. You'll be taken to marvel at the beautifully preserved **Saadian Tombs** (these were built during the reign of the sultan Ahmad al-Mansur), the 19th century **Bahia Palace** (constructed to be the finest royal home of its time), and the 16th century **Ali Ben Youssef Koranic School**. The school is renowned for its delicate stucco plasterwork, carved cedar and awe-inspiring mosaics.

Following your visit of the medina and its various souks, the remainder of the day is yours. Discover more of Marrakesh's ancient architectural gems, or seek out relaxation in one of the city's spas or eateries.

Meals: (B, L)

HIGHLIGHTS DAY 1

- *Arrive Morocco*
- *Transfer to Marrakesh*
- *Check into Riad*
- *Explore Medina and Jma el Fna Square*



HIGHLIGHTS DAY 2

- *Guided Tour of Ancient Medina*
- *Visit Saadian Tombs*
- *Bahia Palace*
- *Koranic School*



Day 3 – June 14, 2014

Marrakesh sits in the foothills of the majestic **Atlas Mountains**. Today, you will experience part of this immense mountain range filled with Berber villages up close and personal. Following breakfast in Marrakesh, you will be taken by private minibus to the High Atlas. The entire range stretches from the Atlantic coast in the south of the country to the Moroccan-Algerian border in the north. A private guide will lead you on a casual hike of the area, lasting two or three hours. The hike isn't too strenuous, and doesn't require the use of professional climbing gear. We suggest well-worn walking shoes and perhaps walking sticks.

During this time, you'll be taught about the surrounding flora and fauna, and will also enjoy a number of excellent photo opportunities, both of the surrounding vistas and of the High Atlas itself. On completion of your hike, you will be taken to a traditional mountain lodge, where you will meet a local family. They will serve you lunch, and discuss their life in the Atlas Mountains. This is a thoroughly unique experience; an opportunity to see Moroccan life up close, and learn about a lifestyle that is very different from western counterparts.

Meals: (B, L, D)

Day 4 – June 15, 2014

Wake up to the cool mountain climate and spectacular views from atop the High Atlas. Following breakfast, your private minibus will descend and then beginning climbing again across the glorious **Tizi n'Tichka**, a mountain pass, which rises 2,260 meters (almost 7415 ft. above sea level). Have your camera at the ready as you weave through some of Morocco's most striking scenery.

On the other side of Tizi n'Tichka, you will call in at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Ait Ben Haddou**. This ancient fortification is an outstanding example of the architecture of southern Morocco. Ait Ben Haddou has featured in a number of movies, including *The Man Who Would Be King*, *Gladiator* and *Babel*. It also starred in the hit HBO show *Game of Thrones*. Explore the narrow streets and passages of Ait Ben Haddou, and see outstanding features such as the angle towers, baffle gate and intricate motifs set into clay brick.

Next you will head to **Ouarzazate**, a relatively new yet nonetheless fascinating city, nicknamed 'Door of the Desert' to visit to the center-piece of the city, **Taorirt Kasbah**, once a residence of the powerful Glaoui family and former rulers of southern Morocco.

The final journey of the day takes you south to the mouth of the Draa Valley, to **Agdz**. Here, you can refresh and unwind – perhaps take a swim – in your fine Kasbah hotel, before enjoying a delicious evening meal.

Meals: (B, D)

HIGHLIGHTS DAY 3

- *Walk Atlas Mountains*
- *Lunch with Local Family*



HIGHLIGHTS DAY 4

- *Tizi n'Tichka Pass*
- *Ait Ben-Haddou*
- *Taorirt Kasbah*
- *Draa Valley*



Day 5 – June 16, 2014

Today is another chance to explore entire swathes of this spectacular country. First, you'll continue through the **Draa Valley**, also known as the 'Country of the Dates'. Stretching from Ouarzazate into the Sahara, the Draa Valley is a land of mountainous sand dunes, endless palm groves, and the Draa, Morocco's largest river. The Draa Valley is also home to many Berber villages. The Berbers live in a very similar way to their ancestors; houses are still built with clay, donkeys used for transport, and the river used for washing clothes.

You'll pass through some of the Draa Valley's scenery, before arriving at the holy village of **Tamegroute**. Here, you will explore its library, filled with ancient manuscripts. You will also have the chance to purchase some of Tamegrout's famous green pottery, crafted here for centuries.

Your next stop on today's itinerary is **M'hamid**. This small, picturesque village is one of only two places in the country where the Sahara desert begins, and is considered the more 'authentic' of the two. Learn how this site was once where huge caravans, some containing thousands of camels, would traditionally meet before venturing to far-flung destinations like Timbuktu. Before heading into the dunes, you'll enjoy lunch and tea with a local family in their humble home. Two more hours of traveling, and you'll arrive at your final destination of the day, **Erg Chigaga**. A campsite, complete with western-style bathrooms, awaits you. Climb on the back of a camel, and take a ride in the red-rich desert sunset. An al fresco feast will then be served out under the stars, before you retire to your Bedouin-style tent for a good night's sleep.

Meals: (B, L, D)

Day 6 – June 17, 2014

Rise early to see the glorious sunrise over the desert sands. You will then be taken to the town of **Zagora**, and your beautiful bed and breakfast accommodation. Here is your chance to enjoy a well-earned day to wind down; enjoy an ice-cold drink while relaxing in the shade of the gardens, or cool down with a dip in the small pool. Insatiable explorers can venture out to the Zagora Mountain from which the town gets its name.

Meals: (B, D)

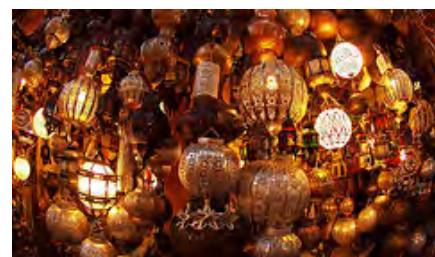
HIGHLIGHTS DAY 5

- *Explore Draa Valley (Valley of Dates)*
- *See Ancient Manuscripts & Famous Green Pottery*
- *Arrive Sahara Campsite*
- *Camel Ride*



HIGHLIGHTS DAY 6

- *Day of Relaxation Zagora*



Day 7 – June 18, 2014

Following breakfast, you will head north toward Addz, and then to the **Dades Valley**, or 'Land of a Thousand Kasbahs'. It will soon become apparent why it has this nickname. Along the route you will encounter a vast array of kasbahs lining the way. For some of these, you will have the chance to pause and take photographs.

Flowing through the valley is the Dades River, a rare water source that allows countless fig, walnut, birch, and almond trees to flourish here. Upon your arrival in **Skoura**, you'll check into a comfortable guesthouse overlooking the valley. You will then be taken on a guided tour of the **Kasbah Amridil**, once owned by the Glaouis, a former powerful family in Morocco. This Kasbah is an outstanding example within Morocco, and has been well preserved throughout the centuries. It's even featured on the national fifty-dirham note. Your knowledgeable guide will take you through the streets and squares of the Kasbah, then up onto the battlements, for views out across Skoura. There will also be a trip to Kasbah Amridil's museum, with its range of antique artifacts and tools on display.

In the evening, use your free time to walk the streets of Skoura and enjoy a relaxing evening. You should also make a point of returning to the kasbah, as it makes an impressive sight when lit up after dark.

Meals: (B, D)

Day 8 – June 19, 2014

Having admired the **Dades Valley** from your transport and accommodation, it is now time to explore it up close and personal. An expert guide will take you on a two-hour walk through the lush vegetation and stunning vistas.

Next, you will head to the **Dades Valley**; actually a gorge, the valley is a setting of striking rock formations, into which several kasbahs have been built. You may even see a nomad or two, grazing their goats here. Lunch will be provided during this expedition. In the afternoon, you'll be taken back to **Skoura**, where there will be further opportunities for relaxation by the guesthouse's outdoor pool, and a further opportunity to explore the town after dark.

Meals: (B, L, D)

HIGHLIGHTS DAY 7

- *Land of 1,000 Kasbahs*
- *Skoura*
- *Amridil Kasbah & museum*



HIGHLIGHTS DAY 8

- *Walk in Dades Valley with guide*



Day 9 – June 20, 2014

Today provides a second opportunity to admire the **Tizi n'Tichka** pass, as your private minibus slowly wends its way back toward Marrakesh. There will also be fresh opportunities to take in the Atlas Mountains. You'll arrive into Marrakesh in the evening, and will be taken straight to your riad, where your time is your own.

Meals: (B)

HIGHLIGHTS DAY 9

- *Travel to Marrakesh*
- *Time to further explore the city*

Day 10 – June 21, 2014

Following breakfast, you will be driven to Casablanca for your departure flight – taking with you cherished memories of an unforgettable trip. We hope you loved it from start to finish... and we'll see you again soon.

Meals: (B)

HIGHLIGHTS DAY 10

- *Transport to Casablanca for departure*



MAGICAL MOROCCO

JUNE 12-21, 2014

Price:

- \$3295. Per person, double occupancy
- Single Supplement - Available upon request

What's Included:

- All accommodations in guesthouses (riads) and small hotels
- All breakfasts, plus lunch and dinner where indicated (excluding beverages)
- Private minibus transport with English-speaking driver
- Sahara Desert visits (camel rides and camp-outs)
- Village visit and meal in a local home
- Private tour of Marrakesh's ancient Medina
- Tips to guides and drivers (but not hotel help or porters)

What's Not Included:

Entrance fees into monuments and attractions. These are invariable inexpensive, but require cash payment upon entry. This also allows you the flexibility to only see the sites you're most interested in.

Transport:

Transport is in the form of private minibus, carrying a maximum number of 12 passengers. All of our minivans are modern and equipped with air conditioning, ensuring maximum comfort, and all our drivers speak English.

Accommodations:

Almost all the hotels and traditional guesthouses (riads) have rooms located on the upper floors, which involves climbing stairs. None of the hotels have elevators. Porters are often available to help with bags.

All rooms on our Morocco itinerary are double occupancy. If you wish to have your own room, an additional supplement will apply. All rooms have en suite facilities.

Mobility:

It should be noted that the terrain in Morocco can be uneven and rough. Both the countryside and cities (especially in the old districts) feature lots of steps, crumbling cobblestone and brick walkways. There is virtually no access for the mobility impaired.

For more information email us at info@uniquebackroadjourneys.com or call us at 404.273.0207 or 1-800-303-0375.

TRIP PROTECTION

Trip Insurance is strongly advised.

Here is a link where you can compare packages after entering the details of your trip. <http://www.quotewright.com>

Deposits and Final Payment

Deposit (\$600) plus single supplement
Due within 7 days of booking

Final Payment (\$2,695)
Due 60 days before the trip
April 14, 2014

Payment Methods

Personal Check
PayPal

Cancellation Policy

If you cancel your trip before the final Payment is due, you will receive 50% of the deposit back. If you cancel your trip after you have made the final payment, 50% of the full payment will be reimbursed. If you cancel less than 30 days before the trip departs, all of the deposits will be forfeited unless there is a waiting list in which case we will refund 50% of the cost of the trip.

Reserve your spot now. There is only room for 10. Sign up [here](#).