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THE IMPERIAL CITIES & THE KASBAH TRAIL

Day 1: Arrive Marrakech and check into your riad

Day 2: Exploring Marrakech

Day 3: Day trip to Essaouira

Day 4: Marrakech - Tichka Pass - Ait Ben Haddou Kasbah - Dades Valley

Day 5: Dades Gorge - Todra Gorge - Merzouga

Day 6: Merzouga the desert area

Day 7: Merzouga – Ziz Valley – Midelt – Azrou - Fes

Day 8: Exploring Fes

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Day 10: Departure

Itinerary :

Day 1: Arrive Marrakech and check into your riad

Upon arrival, we will pick you up and drive you to your riad in the Medina. Overnight at riad Ksar Anika or similar. Bed and Breakfast (BB).

Day 2: Exploring Marrakech:

After breakfast in the riad , you can start exploring Marrakech " the red city of Morocco". Your guide will ensure that you see the most important places of historical and cultural interest, including the Saadian tombs; the Bahia Palace and the Ben Youssef Coranique school. Today, you will also walk the souks and enjoy the fascinating colours and the wonderful smells. Lunch at a restaurant near the square, then in the afternoon you will visit the Majorelle Gardens, and the Koutoubia Tower.

Overnight accommodation will be in your riad as above. (BB)

Day 3: Day trip to Essaouira:

After breakfast in your riad, you will start traveling to Essaouira, " Mogador". Just before you get to Essaouira and since this is the land of the "Argan culture", you will see herds of goats climbing the Argan trees looking for better food they can't find on the ground. Here you will have the opportunity to visit the women's co-operative of Argan oil where they extract the oil that is famous for its culinary, cosmetic and medical properties. Get to Essaouira around 11 am and then start our exploration of the city; You'll visit the Skala Fortress; see Thuya wood carved by artisans; walk through the alleys of the medina and view hundreds of handicrafts.

Essaouira knew many civilizations - including the Portuguese occupation, which affects much of its architecture - however, it remains a small village with much history. Because of its size and its characteristic blue doors and washed walls, it is also regarded as Morocco's "Jewel of the Atlantic". Our visit includes the Mellah - the Jewish headquarter, and the beach. There is an annual festival of "Gnawa music", where many musical groups come from different parts of Africa and the world. Today you will have lunch in a Moroccan way: bought fishes cooked to order, a very authentic experience. After that you will have some free time before we drive you back to Marrakech. Overnight at your riad as above. (BB)

Day 4: Marrakech - Tichka Pass - Ait Ben Haddou Kasbah - Dades Valley:

After breakfast in your riad, you will start travelling to Ouarzazat and the Dades Valley via the Tichka Pass and over the High Atlas Mountains. Today you will enjoy travelling through the dramatic road of the pass and the fascinating views over the Berber villages and the amazing landscape changing as

the day progresses. Your first stop will be at the Ait Ben Haddou Kasbah, the largest Kasbah in Morocco. Built by the last Berber chieftain El Glaoui Thami in the late 19th century, it is now a UNESCO matrimonial historical site, which today still houses many Glaoui family members. Lunch by the Kasbah and continue to Ouarzazat, “the Hollywood of Africa”.

After lunch, travel to the Dades Gorge through the road of “the Thousand Kasbahs”, which offers many fine photo opportunities of nature and people. We’ll get to Kalaat Mgouna - famous for roses and its annual festival during the roses harvest in May - visit the Berber Souk of Kalaat Mgouna, then continue to Bouthaghrar along the Rose valley. On to the Dades Valley where you will enjoy seeing the amazing rock formation famous as “the monkey toes”.

Overnight at Hotel Xaluaca dades. Half-board. (HB)

Day 5: Dades Gorge - Todra Gorge - Merzouga:

After breakfast in the hotel, you will start traveling to Merzouga via the Todra Gorge and the small towns of Erfoud and Rissani. In Todra valley you will enjoy the panoramic views of the old mud Berber villages overlooking the valley. At Todra Gorge, You will have the opportunity to walk under the 300m high red cliff, popular with many rock- climbers. Here you will have time for an hour’s hiking within the valley. Afterwards, you will continue our trip to Erfoud and Rissani where we have lunch; afterwards, we leave for the village of Merzouga - After a welcoming glass of mint tea, you will check in to your riad. Overnight accommodation at Riad. (HB)

Day 6: Merzouga the desert area:

After breakfast in your riad, you will start an explorative journey of the area before you camel trek and spend the night at the desert camp. Today, you’ll visit the Gnawa people, originally slaves brought from Sudan, to experience their music and culture. Not far away there’s the lake of Merzouga, with its bird populations, depending on the season.

You will also visit the authentic souk of Rissani, an area that was famous for the caravans trading as far as Timbouctou in Mali. Here you will walk the souks , viewing vegetable , dates, crafts and animals. If time permits it, you may also visit the nomad wire house where many Berber handicrafts are priced lower than in the big cities. In the afternoon, you will mount your camel and trek within the sand sea of Merzouga, in time to enjoy the sunset before you have dinner in the camp where you spend the night. (HB)

Day 7: Merzouga – Ziz Valley – Midelt – Azrou - Fes:

Early in the morning we will wake you up to watch what well may be the best sunrise of your life. You’ll peacefully camel-trek back to the village of Merzouga. Over the dunes, you couldn’t fail to appreciate the unique beauty of the spectacular Erg Chebbi sand dunes - changing with the light as the day progresses.

After breakfast in your riad, you will start travelling to Fes via the Ziz Valley and Azrou. You will enjoy the fascinating landscape along the magnificent Ziz Gorges carved through volcanic rock, and through the Tizi n’Talghamt Pass to Midelt. Stop in Zaida to enjoy a barbecue and refreshment with a glass of mint tea then continue our journey to Fes. You will stop at the Cedar Forest, on the Middle Atlas Mountains where you will see the Barbarian apes in the wild. Get to Fes at the end of the day and check in to your riad. Overnight accommodation at riad Yacout, riad Salam or similar. (BB)

Day 8: Exploring Fes:

Most of the morning will be spent visiting the medina (the old city) and its alleys. You will start with a walking tour within the narrow labyrinth streets, visiting the famous old Tanneries , and then the Quaraouine Mosque and University , the Attarin Medersa and the Najjarin Fountain. After lunch in a traditional Moroccan restaurant in the Medina, we will pick you up and drive to the old Jewish quarter and the Royal palace gate yard, where you will learn about the Jewish history in Morocco. Your visit includes the tile art factory and then a wonderful panoramic view over the whole Medina of Fes.

Overnight accommodation will be at your riad as above. (BB)

Day 9: Fes – Meknes – Rabat:

After breakfast in your riad you will start traveling to Rabat via Volubilis and Meknes. Your journey will be over the Rif Mountains and the foothills of Zgouta. You will get to Volubilis, the well preserved Roman Empire in North Africa, dating to 25BC, where you will see the most beautiful Mosaics in Morocco dating back to 3rd century BC. Here you will learn a lot about the Roman occupation and culture in Morocco.

Afterwards, your journey continues to Meknes, the Ismaili capital of Morocco; here you will see the fascinating gate Bab Mansour built by the sultan My Ismail, the royal granary and the Sahrij Souani basin used for irrigation and plantation. After some free time wandering in the Lahdim square, you will continue to Rabat via the highway. Overnight accommodation at riad Kalaa. (BB)

Day 10: Departure:

After breakfast in your riad, we will drive you to Casablanca airport for your departure flight.