



Tour dates in Morocco: 24 April – 11 May 2025 (18 days & 17 nights)

Tour price: \$10350 (land content & no single supplement)

Airfare: Available from Merrilyn Priest at TravelManagers Australia.

Type of touring: Long distance coach travel, mini bus and four wheel drive vehicles in the Atlas Mountains.

Fitness level required: See back page.

Type of accommodation: We stay in good quality hotels, beautiful riads and two nights in the Ait Khozema Project home in the mountain village of Amassine.

MOROCCO

'Morocco is like a tree whose roots lie in Africa but whose leaves breathe in European air.' This is the metaphor that King Hassan II (1929-99) used to describe a country that is both profoundly traditional and strongly drawn to the modern world. It is this double-sided, seemingly contradictory disposition that gives Morocco its cultural richness.' (Quoted from the Eyewitness Guide: Morocco) This tour explores the full range of historical, geographical and cultural aspects that make Morocco a fascinating destination.

Visits include: Casablanca, Hassan II Mosque, Rabat/Sale, Hassan Tower, Chellah Gardens, Oudaya Kasbah, Meknes, Fes, Atlas Mountains, Bin El Ouidane, Ait Benhaddou, Ait Khozema project, Berber village of Amassine, Toubkal National Park, Marrakech, Jemaa el Fna, Essaouira, souks, palaces and riads.

The Ait Khozema Project

In 1997 at the 15th Anniversary DOBAG* Conference in Istanbul we met Austrian Professor Wilfried Stanzer (a former president of ICOC – International Conference on Oriental Carpets) and in talking to him became fascinated by a project he was embarking upon to revive the carpet weaving traditions of the Berber people of the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco.

As with the nomadic tribes of many countries the Berbers had lost their traditional methods due to the gradual decimation of their culture. Professor Stanzer employed the expertise of Dr Harald Boehmer, founder of the DOBAG* project, to help with the rediscovery of the natural dyes of the area in the Atlas Mountains where the Berber tribes still lived. Subsequently, the unique Ait Khozema project has developed whereby Berber women weavers are now benefiting from their own work, producing a few hundred traditional-design, natural-dyed carpets per year. Very few people visit the project (which is not a tourist destination) and through our contact with Professor Stanzer we are the only Australian groups to do so.

We hope you can join us for a memorable Moroccan experience.

Terry Hoyne

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*DOBAG is an acronym, in English meaning 'Natural Dye Research and Development Project'. It operates in selected villages in Western Turkey and we are the Australian representatives for the internationally acclaimed project.

itinerary

Overnight Stays: Casablanca (1 night), Rabat (2 nights), Fes (3 nights), Bin el Ouidane (1 night), Iminifri (1 night), Tamdaght (1 night), Amassine (2 nights), Marrakech (3 nights), Essaouira (2 nights), Casablanca (1 night)

Day 1: Thursday 24 April

Arrive Casablanca, Welcome Dinner

Those travelling with Emirates arrive in Casablanca in the early afternoon and will be met and transferred to our hotel overlooking the Atlantic. This evening we will have our welcome dinner in the legendary Rick's Café made famous in the classic movie Casablanca.

D o/n Casablanca

Day 2: Friday 25 April

Hassan II Mosque, La Sqala Restaurant, Rabat/Sale

After a leisurely morning in the hotel we will visit the amazing Hassan II Mosque. This massive structure and its vast Medersa complex is one of the largest religious buildings in the world.

The site covers nine hectares and the main prayer hall can accommodate twenty five thousand worshippers. After our visit we will have lunch in one of Casablanca's most popular restaurants on the harbour. Later we drive north to the capital Rabat and check into our riad in the old medina for two nights. There will be free time to explore some of the old medina of Rabat

BLD o/n Rabat

Day 3: Saturday 26 April

Rabat, Chellah Gardens, Hassan Tower, Oudaya Kasbah

In the morning we will visit the Chellah Gardens (14th century Merinid necropolis), Hassan Tower and Oudaya Kasbah which is within the walls of the 13th century Andalusian style quarter. Later we will have lunch in a restaurant overlooking the Atlantic. In the afternoon there will be free time to explore the old souk of Rabat.

BLD o/n Rabat

Day 4: Sunday 27 April

Meknes, Dar el-Ma, Volubilis, Fes

We drive to Meknes where we visit the 17th century Dar el-Ma (Water House), subterranean granaries and the medina of the old city, where we will see the ornately decorated gate of Bab Mansour built in 1732. Later we drive to the famous Roman ruins and World Heritage site of Volubilis. Lunch will be in a spectacular location overlooking the ruins. In the afternoon we drive to the ancient and exotic city of Fes where we will arrive at our beautiful riad in the heart of the old medina.

BLD o/n Fes

Day 5: Monday 28 April

Fes, old city, Mausoleum of Moulay Idriss II, Nejjarine fountain, old tannery, ceramic workshop

Walking through the amazing souk in the old city medina you can believe you are still in the 15th century, visiting medersas, Nejjarine fountain and the fascinating tanneries. Lunch will be at a restaurant in the old medina. In the afternoon we will visit one of the leading ceramic workshops where we will be able to observe the ancient craft of Zellij tile work and the making of beautiful pottery.

BLD o/n Fes

Day 6: Tuesday 29 April

Moroccan cooking class, free time

This morning we will join a traditional Moroccan cooking class in another beautiful riad in the old medina. Following the class on the rooftop terrace we will enjoy the fruits of our labours with a relaxing lunch. In the afternoon we will return to our riad and have time to indulge in some of the many spa services that this wonderful riad offers or maybe you will opt to revisit the old souk to look for more treasures.

BLD o/n Fes

Day 7: Wednesday 30 April

Middle Atlas Mountains, cedar forests, Beni Mellal, Bin El Ouidane

Today we start our journey into the Atlas Mountains first driving through a flowering landscape that leads us to the town of Ifrane. Developed by the French, the ski resort town has the feeling of an alpine village. Later in the morning we drive through the magnificent cedar forests of the Middle Atlas. In the afternoon we travel further south to Beni Mellal where we climb the steep first stage of the High Atlas. In the late afternoon we arrive at Bin El Ouidane, the largest man-made reservoir in Morocco. We will have time for a swim in the pool before spending the night in our hotel overlooking the lake.

BLD o/n Bin El Ouidane

Day 8: Thursday 1 May

Le Maroc Blanc, Iminifri Natural Bridge

After breakfast overlooking the lake we will drive up to the home of Berber rug designer Mustapha Hansali. Here we will be able to see some wonderful long piled rugs inspired by old Berber designs. Mustapha's project, Le Maroc Blanc has won numerous awards including "best tribal carpets" at the prestigious Domotex Carpet Fair in Hanover Germany.

After lunch we drive on to the small town of Iminifri where we will be able to visit the wonderful natural bridge which rises high above the deep gorge where mountain ravens swoop back and forth from their nests high above the stream below.

BLD o/n Iminifri

Day 9: Friday 2 May

Magdez Village, Ait Ali Nitto, Ait Benhaddou, Tamdaght

Today we drive through the mountains in the landcruisers making our way to the Berber village of Magdez which is one of the most fascinating mountain villages in Morocco. Situated in a rugged landscape at an altitude of 1960m it features some incredible architecture with traditional mud and stone houses rising up to five stories high. After visiting some of the houses in Magdez we drive back towards the main road and stop for lunch at a simple auberge. Later we drive further south and make our way to Ait Benhaddou the most famous kasbah complex in Morocco. We stay in a nearby restored old kasbah in the tiny village of Tamdaght.

BLD o/n Tamdaght

Day 10: Saturday 3 May

Ait Benhaddou, Amassine Village, Ait Khozema Project

This morning we will visit Ait Benhaddou the most famous kasbah complex in Morocco. Now a UNESCO world heritage site the impressive mud buildings have been used as a backdrop in a number of well known movies including Lawrence of Arabia. Later we drive into the mountains again and in the shadow of the volcanic peak Jebel Siroua (3305m) we arrive at the village of Amassine where we spend two nights in the Ait Khozema project house. After lunch Wilfried Stanzer and his assistants will give us a first hand look at the process of rug making including combing and spinning the lustrous mountain wool, weaving, and the art of natural dyeing.

BLD

o/n Amassine

Day 11: Sunday 4 May

Amassine (summer village), World Creation Valley, Ait Khozema carpets

With the landcruisers we climb higher to the summer village of Amassine (many villagers spend the summer here). Here we have a spectacular view to the highest mountains of the High Atlas (4165 metres in the Toubkal National Park) and are standing in the volcanic centre of the area. We enter the "world creation valley", a volcanic stone creation, where scattered everywhere are stones resembling animals and trolls. Here we will have a picnic lunch and later in the afternoon return to the Amassine village house.

BLD

o/n Amassine

Day 12: Monday 5 May

Tizi n' Tichka Pass, Marrakech

This morning after breakfast we leave the village of Amassine and take the road to Marrakech. After lunch we cross the High Atlas mountains at 2260 metres via Tizi n' Tichka, the highest pass in Morocco. We descend into the valleys where picturesque Berber villages are painted pink with oleander. In the afternoon we arrive at Marrakech and our beautiful riad in the old medina.

BLD

o/n Marrakech

Day 13: Tuesday 6 May

The souk of Marrakech, Jemaa el Fna, Madersa Ben Youssef

Firstly we walk through the souk (market place or bazaar) of the city. The word 'souk' is derived from the country people's words for 'magic box'. At the end of the souk is the old koranic school "Ben Youssef" built in the fascinating Andalusian style. We walk slowly back through the souk, visiting all the handicraft areas: leather, bronze, wood, textiles and silversmith. Lunch will be on a shady terrace above the Jemaa el Fna. After lunch we are free to relax in the riad or take another visit to the souk. Towards sunset we walk in the Jemaa el Fna now occupied by musicians, artists and snake charmers. After watching the sunset over the square we visit an old palace, now a lovely restaurant, to have dinner.

BLD

o/n Marrakech

Day 14: Wednesday 7 May

Majorelle Garden and Berber Museum, Museum Yves Saint Laurent, free time

This morning we will take a short drive to the very exotic and colourful garden of the famous Art Deco painter Jaques Majorelle. We will also visit an excellent small museum depicting the traditional culture and daily life of the Berber people. Later we will walk to the recently opened Museum Yves Saint Laurent which is entirely devoted to the work of the legendary fashion designer. The area surrounding the museum and Majorelle Garden has some beautiful shops and galleries selling a vast array of quality merchandise. There will be free time to wander in the area before returning to our riad in the old medina.

BLD

o/n Marrakech

Day 15: Thursday 8 May

Marrakech, Argan Oil Co-ops, Essaouira

We leave the city of Marrakech driving west towards the Atlantic coast where we arrive at the colourful and historic seaside port of Essaouira. The Berber name means 'the wall', a reference to the fortress walls that originally enclosed the city. The old medina is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the narrow stone streets are home to many artisans displaying and selling their numerous handicrafts. As this is within the area where the highly prized Argan tree grows there are also many women's co-ops producing the oil and related products from these native Moroccan trees. We will visit one of the co-ops before arriving at our wonderful riad in the medina.

BLD

o/n Essaouira

Day 16: Friday 9 May

Marrakech

Today we will have the opportunity to further explore the fascinating port city of Essaouira at our leisure. As there are no cars in the old medina it is easy to walk through the souk and down to the famous fishing harbour on the Atlantic Ocean.

BLD

o/n Essaouira

Day 17: Saturday 10 May

Essaouira, Marrakech, Casablanca

After breakfast we leave Essaouira and drive back in the direction of Marrakech. We will stop on the way for lunch and in the afternoon return to Casablanca on the motorway which takes us through the agricultural landscapes on the western side of the Atlas Mountains. This evening we will have our farewell dinner in one of the restaurants close to our hotel.

BLD

o/n Casablanca

Day 18: Sunday 11 May

This morning our tour ends and those travelling on the Emirates flight will be transferred to the Mohammed V International Airport for the return journey home.

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"Terry, most of all we want to thank you and Wilfred for such an amazing experience. It is certainly one of my favourite holidays and the memories will stay with us forever."

Lorraine Gersinich and Derek Nash
(Shenton Park WA)



The Old Tanneries, Fes



TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

1. All meals and bottled water in Morocco
2. Accommodation in twin share rooms with private facilities (except Amassine).
3. Transportation in four wheel drive vehicles and coach.
4. Airport to hotel transfer if arriving on Emirates early afternoon flight.
5. All entrance fees to sites indicated in the itinerary.
6. Guide, Professor Wilfried Stanzer (founder of the Ait Khozema project).
7. All tips in hotels and restaurants, driver and assistants.
8. Cooking class in Fes

TOUR PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

1. Air fare Australia/Morocco return.
2. Travel insurance.
3. Personal spending money.
4. Airport transfers if not departing on Emirates afternoon flight.
5. Beverages with meals.



Door in Oudaya Kasbah

FITNESS LEVEL REQUIRED: This tour is on the adventurous side. Four days involve travel in four wheel drive vehicles, much of it in the Atlas Mountains up to 2900metres. Two nights we spend in basic accommodation belonging to the Ait Khozema project at Amassine in the Atlas Mountains. The rest of the nights are spent in good quality hotels and riads. Some days involve extensive outdoor walking, steps and rocky ground. Toilet and washing facilities in some places will be rudimentary. The tour should not present any problem to active people who can manage day to day walking, squatting and stair climbing. If you have any doubts about your ability to manage the tour please contact us to discuss your situation.

TO MAKE A RESERVATION:

Please complete the attached reservation form and send it together with your non-refundable deposit of \$500 per person to: Merrilyn Priest, Personal Travel Manager, TravelManagers Australia Lic. No. 9TA1394
Mobile: 0418 935 626 Email: merrilyn.priest@travelmanagers.com.au

Payment can be made by bank transfer or credit card. Payment by Credit Card will incur the following service fees: MasterCard and Visa Card, 1.50% and American Express, 3.0%. Please contact Merrilyn for further details.

PAYING THE BALANCE:

The balance of your tour price (less \$500 deposit) must be paid to TravelManagers Australia, on / before 75 days prior to departure.

CANCELLATION FEES:

Prior to 60 days, full refund less \$500; 60-31 days forfeit 25% of total fare; 30-16 days forfeit 50% of total fare; 15 days or non-appearance forfeit 100% of total fare.

CHANGES IN TOUR PRICE:

The price of the tour is shown in Australian dollars and is subject to change without prior notice until full payment is made. We will, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price.

TRAVEL INSURANCE : AIR BOOKINGS : VISA ASSISTANCE : TRANSFERS :

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by international Travel Insurance for this trip. For any assistance with Travel Insurance, Airfares or other travel matters related to this trip, please contact Merrilyn – your Personal Travel Manager.

