

ENCOUNTER OVERLAND MOROCCO

16 APRIL - 29 APRIL 2018



COSTS PER PERSON:-

Tour Price Guide – MAD 13,050 Twin Share

Tour Price Guide – MAD 18,090 Single

Additional Night Casablanca – MAD 650 Twin Share

Additional Night Casablanca – MAD 1100 Single

Additional Night Marrakech – MAD 600 Twin Share

Additional Night Marrakech – MAD 950 Single

Day 1 - 16APR18 - CASABLANCA (Arrival transfer included.) For those who have arrived in time, a 2 hour visit to the Hassan Mosque (entry price not included). Hotel **Grand Mogador**

Day 2 - 17APR18 – CASABLANCA-RABAT-FES

Drive (approx 1 hour) to Rabat and see the Royal Palace, Mausoleum Mohammed and Hassan Tower. Continue (approx 2.5 hours) to Fes.

We set forth along the coast heading north, towards Rabat, the city that was established as the capital of their protectorate by the French in 1912 and since independence has served as the capital of a modern Morocco. Rabat's history stretches back as far as 8BC, when settlers arrived in what is now the Chellah area, a district that went on to become a prosperous Roman town, before being transformed by the Merinids into a cemetery. On arrival we will have an opportunity to see the Hassan Tower and the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, the Kasbah des Oudaias, originally a fortified town that is now infused with a distinctly Andalusian flavour and the Royal Palace. The road northeast, travelling via Nzala des Beni Ammar to the country's cultural capital, Fes. Probably the oldest of the imperial cities, its fascinating history is rich with wars, murders and political intrigue. It has played an important part in Moroccan trade, culture, religion and politics as well as being the seat of learning for science. The old and new towns

are adjacent but totally separate entities and the panoramic views of Fes El Bali (the old city), seen from the North Borj (tower), are very useful to help you orientate yourself for when you are in the narrow alleyways. **Across Hotel, Fes**

DAY 3 – 18APR18 - FES Drive (1 hour) to Meknes, once the heart of the Moroccan Sultanate, lying amidst the landscapes of the Oued Boufekrane River valley. The Sultan loved Meknes, and he would have liked never to leave it once he wrote a chronicle to the tyrannical Sultan Moulay Ismail. Ismail (1672- 1727) was a tireless builder, and his greatest efforts were reserved for his capital at Meknes, which at its peak, with over 20 grand gateways and 50 palaces, must have been a sight to inspire any who looked upon it. Visit the Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail. In spite of Ismail's seemingly unquenchable blood lust and far from benevolent treatment of his subjects, the sultan still seems to be held in high regard and his tomb is something of a place of reverence even today amongst a people who still see his rule as Morocco's Golden Age. We'll also take in the Bab el Khamis Gate and walk through the city's spectacular centrepiece, the Bab Mansour, en route to the Place el Hedim and the city's Medina, where we can try our bartering skills in the busy markets. From here we head next for the nearby ancient site of Volubilis – the capital of the Roman province of Mauritania Tingitana. The detailed mosaics here are still intact and the site gives a good idea of the layout of provincial settlements. Lunch in a Berber home (cooking course) and return to Fes for overnight. Evening, traditional show with belly dancing.

DAY 4 – 19APR18 – FES We start with a visit to the Ramparts to see the Royal Palace and panoramic view of the Old Town. Drive to the entrance of the Old Town then walk (few hours – no vehicle access). Visit the world's oldest university, the Mausoleum of Idriss the 2nd, the tanneries and the souks. Visit the famous carpet cooperative for mint tea and carpet showing. Craftwork made and sold in the Fes medina is considered amongst the finest in Morocco and a wander through its artisan districts reveal weavers and brass workshops, coppersmiths and tanners, producing beautiful pieces much as they have for generations. Beautiful buildings abound in this city as well, including the Sanctuary of Moulay Idriss 2nd, the Karouine Mosque and the Al Andalus Mosque (viewed from the outside only (Medina)).

DAY 5 – 20APR18 – FES-VIA THE MIDDLE ATLAS AND MIDELT- ERFOUD

Turning south today we climb steadily into the dramatic landscapes of the Middle Atlas, heading first towards Immouzer and Ifrane and passing near the small mountain village of Azrou, which in the Berber tongue translates as 'the rock'. This is the land of the fiercely independent Berbers, the Lords of the Atlas, whose traditions and ways still hold sway up here in their mountain strongholds far away from the cities below. The Berbers present us with a unique view of a way of life lost to the rest of North Africa, where music and dance, even language and religion, are far removed from their Arab neighbours. Continuing into Berber sheep raising country we head to Timadite and over the Col du Zad, before crossing the Tizi N'Tairhemt Camel Pass and continuing via the Gorge du Ziz to Er Rachidia. Lunch will be in Midelt. Finally we traverse a broad plateau past Meski Oasis, the so-called 'Blue Spring' bordering the arid desert plains, from where our journey brings us at last to the on to the desert settlement of Erfoud. Overnight **Xaluca Hotel**

DAY 6 – 21APR18 – ERFOUD-MERZOUGA 4 WD trip to Merzouga via Rissani to visit the Market and the Holy Mosque. We'll spend the night in Merzouga in Berber Tents. Sunset or sunrise – camel ride. **Hotel Belle Etoile**

DAY 7 – 22APR18 – MERZOUGA – VIA TODRA GORGE AND TINGHIR-DADES (1,000 Kasbas)

Following an ancient route along the southern slopes of the Atlas, we reach the town of Tinerhir, our base from which to explore the towering vistas of the Todra Gorge with its famous lush palmeries that line the banks of the nearby Todra River. Extending some way along the river's course, the gardens are a lush oasis of produce, with date palms and olive groves, fruit orchards and almonds, all littered amongst a fertile landscape of grain and vegetables. Continue to Dades. (**Hotel Dades w/listed – holding Hotel Karam Ouarzazate also**)

DAY 8 – 23APR18 – DADES-KALAA MEDOUNA-AIT BENHADOU

This morning we drive westwards, where we make a short stop in El Kelaa des M'Gouna positioned at the foot of a rocky outcrop that separates the Dades and Mgoun Valleys. Famed for its roses, the town lies blanketed under a landscape of scented blooms each spring, which are then harvested in May during the famous Festival of the Roses and processed into rosewater to be sold throughout the Islamic world. Continue to Ait Benhadou. **Hotel Ksar Ighnda**

DAY 9 – 24APR18 - OUIRGANE Exact stop will depend on number of rooms required. Heading north, the parched desert sand and stone gives way to the hills and deep gorges of the High Atlas Mountains as we wind our way up and over the Tizi n' Tichka, the highest vehicular pass in Morocco and often snow covered during the winter months. Depending on our arrival time there may be the opportunity for a short hike around Ouirgane, Imlil or alternatively to the Berber village of Matate. **Hotel Etoile de Toubkal**

DAY 10 – 25APR18 – OUIRGANE-ESSAOUERA

Today we head via Marrakesh to take the road west to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Our destination is the historic port of Essaouira. This afternoon you will have free time to enjoy this charming small seaside town. **Hotel Atlas Essaouera**

DAY 11 – 26APR18 - ESSAOUERA The day is free for independent explorations. Situated within 15th century Portuguese fortifications, the town has a relaxed but lively feel and an experience not to be missed is a visit to the old walled Medina. After passing through the narrow, highly decorated arched entrance, it may be hard to resist snapping up last minute gifts such as locally made rustic leather belts, gleaming gold and silver jewellery, or wooden boxes exquisitely inlaid with ebony and mother of pearl by local craftsmen. The lively throng of the Medina, with its local women carrying out their daily routines, veiled in their traditional dress, forms a sharp contrast to the open golden sands of the harbour area where hopeful seabirds can be seen circling above the fisherman as they return from the blue waters with their daily catches. We suggest a stroll around the old town, perhaps taking in the Mellah (the old Jewish Quarter) or maybe a wander along the fine sandy beach.

DAY 12 – 27APR18 – ESSAOUERA-MARRAKESH A morning drive takes us east to Marrakech, where we'll have the better part of two days to explore a city that has for centuries been a meeting place for the mountain Berbers and the desert peoples of the south. This afternoon we take a sightseeing tour of Morocco's fascinating Red City. Like many North African towns, Marrakech is divided into two distinct parts, the Gueliz (the modern French-built city) and the Medina (the Old City), a place where trade and barter amongst the colourful souks still renders its ancient heart a glittering cacophony of noise and colour. Journeying into this vibrant city with a local guide affords a chance to discover some of its most enthralling sites. The city's beating heart is the spectacular Djemma-el-Fna, a site not to be missed and a scene straight out of the pages of the Arabian Nights. Here you will find the streets and alleys alive with storytellers and musicians, jugglers and acrobats, snake charmers and clowns. Marrakech is a city like no other, boasting a staggering array of spectacular architecture and wonderful facades and not to be missed are the Koutoubia mosque and tower, Saadian tombs, Ben Youssef medersa, the Dar Si Said Palace (now the Museum of Moroccan Art) and the Menara gardens. This evening there is also an opportunity to visit a traditional Hammam.

DAY 13 – 28APR18 – MARRAKESH Today has been left free to continue exploring this amazing city at your leisure. You can wander past vendors selling doughnuts and fried grasshoppers, meander through native markets where Muslim women, their hands and feet dyed with henna, call out to sell their wares, and enjoy the sounds and the smells of the exotic. Perhaps you will prefer to take time to enjoy more of the remarkable Medina, haggling for a bargain or two, or simply sitting at one of the local cafés and watching the street tableaux unfold before you. Do remember that many of the mosques will be forbidden to non-Muslims and be careful of photographing women. If you are unsure, it is always best to ask. **Hotel Corail**

DAY 14 – 29APR18 - MARRAKESH Our tour ends in Marrakech today after breakfast. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you might be able to spend some additional time exploring the city independently and buy the last souvenirs in the market. (Departure Transfer included.)

TOUR COST INCLUDES:

- **13 Nights Accommodation in 4 Star Hotels. (Ghali has special Rates – “we are sending many People all on HB and it doesn't change much for BB)**
- **1 Night in Luxury Berber Tent in Merzouga plus Camel Ride**
- **New 17-Seater Bus and 4 WD from Erfoud to Merzouga and back**
- **Professional English Speaking Guide**
- **All the Tips**
- **1 Dinner in Fes with Show and Belly Dance**
- **2 Lunches: Midelt on the way to Erfoud and Tingher on the way to Dades**

Rates are based on 10 Pax. If we have more Pax the cost of the Hotels will remain the same, as well as the Tips, however the cost for the Guide and Transport will alter.