

# Morocco to Gibraltar

Join Nick & Beant Deacock on a relaxed 16-day holiday from Casablanca to Tangier then by ferry to Gibraltar across the 'Gateway to the Mediterranean'



Ouarzazate



Imlil, Atlas Mountains

Morocco is in many ways a country apart. It nestles on the northwestern tip of Africa, separated from the rest of the continent by the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert. Its history, climate and geography are more closely related to the Mediterranean than to the rest of Africa, and for this reason visitors to Morocco are often struck by the odd sensation of having not quite reached Africa. In the north, its lush highland valleys, and evocative old cities reinforce this impression. Yet, as one moves south and east, into and over the starkly beautiful ranges of the Atlases, Morocco's Mediterranean character melts away like a mirage. The Sahara stretches out to the horizon, and forbidding kasbahs overlook the landscape.

Highlights include exploring the gardens, souks and history of Marrakesh, the 'pearl of the south'; the Roman ruins of Essaouira and Volubilis; Berber villages in the high Atlas and Saharan hinterland; the Moorish legacy of various impressive souks (markets), kasbahs (forts) and mosques; and the enduring history of a region controlled for centuries variously by the Carthaginians, Romans, Moors, Spanish and French until independence.

The tour concludes in Gibraltar on 19th May, with participants choosing to return to Australia or extend their travels through Europe or elsewhere. Far Horizons are happy to assist with your flights from/to Australia and post-tour extension arrangements on request.

From Australia you have a variety of airline and route choices, including the overnight Emirates service to Dubai, connecting early the next morning and **arriving Casablanca on Saturday 4th May** to commence group arrangements. We stay two nights at Kenzi Tower Hotel.

We take a full day tour Casablanca, including visits to Mohamed V Place, UN Square, the new medina and Mahkama (Law Court), Notre Dame de Lourdes Church, Anfa residential suburb, Hassan II Mosque (2nd largest in the world) and Ain Diab (Casablanca's cafe 'playground').

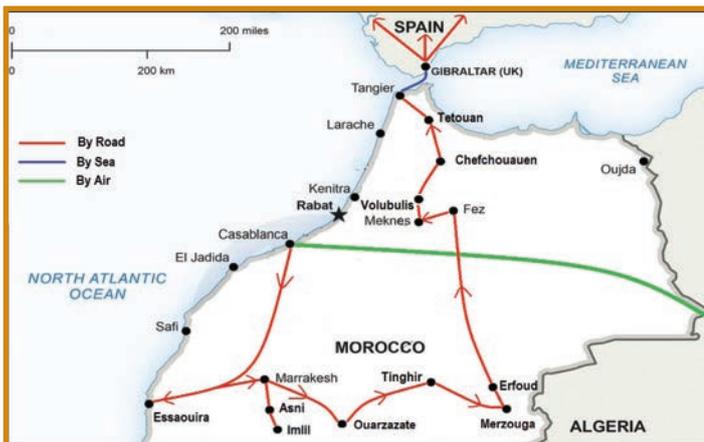
From Casablanca we drive about 3½ hours to Marrakesh, "the pearl of the south". Second of the four Imperial cities founded in 1062 A.D., Marrakesh is a rose-red city at the foot of the snow-capped Atlas Mountains. In the afternoon we visit the stately 12th century Koutoubia minaret, Majorelle Gardens, Bahia Palace, the secret 16th century tombs of the Saadian Dynasty and the Jewish Synagogue Salat ElAzama built in 1492 in the mellah (Jewish Quarter) of the medina (old town). We stay four nights at the ofitel Marrakesh Hotel.

In the morning we explore the gardens and souks, starting with the Majorelle Garden, created in the '20s by the French painter Jacques Majorelle. We walk through the colorful and aromatic Souks and labyrinth of narrow alleyways of the medina, thence to the famous Djemaâ El Fna Square (the 'Assembly of the Dead' where, until the middle of the 19th century, were traditionally displayed the severed heads of criminals). Afternoon at leisure.

We take a full day excursion to Essaouira. After the Carthaginians, the Roman King Juba II took an interest in Essaouira for sound business reasons. The Portuguese fortified the city which they called Mogador (probably derived from the Berber word amogdul, meaning safe anchorage), but Essaouira's really prosperous era began in the 18th century when Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah constructed a port plus the fortifications to protect it. Behind the beach, looking like a Mediterranean village, is the white town accented by deep blue shutters and doors in the Portuguese style. Once inside the town walls, we discover a charming

## Visiting

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Casablanca</b>          | 2 nights |
| <b>Marrakesh</b>           | 4 nights |
| Atlas Mountains            |          |
| Asni, Imlil                |          |
| Kasbah Ait Benhaddou       |          |
| Essaouira                  |          |
| <b>Ouarzazate</b>          | 1 night  |
| Road of a Thousand Kasbahs |          |
| Roses Valley               |          |
| El Kelaa M'Gouna           |          |
| Tinghir                    |          |
| Tinejdad                   |          |
| <b>Merzouga</b>            | 1 night  |
| Erfoud                     |          |
| <b>Fes</b>                 | 2 nights |
| Meknes                     |          |
| Volubilis                  |          |
| <b>Chefchaouen</b>         | 1 night  |
| Tetouan                    |          |
| <b>Tangier</b>             | 2 nights |
| Tangier to Algeciras Ferry |          |
| <b>Gibraltar</b>           | 2 nights |



Kasbah Ait Benhaddou, near Marrakesh

provincial atmosphere and see craftsmen hard at work on their small furniture pieces which they inlay with wood and mother of pearl.

We depart for an exhilarating drive south through the Moulay Brahim Gorges and high valleys to Asni village, an open-air Berber village. From here we enter the Ait Mizane Valley towards Jebel Toubkal, at 4167m the highest peak in North Africa, where we can possibly stop at Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot for lunch. We continue deeper into this dramatic valley to the Berber village of Imlil (1740m), known as Morocco's 'Little Chamonix'.

We drive to Ouarzazate, travelling deep into the High Atlas Mountains as we pass Berber villages and cross the Tizi n'Tichka Pass (2260m) with awe-inspiring views of the Moroccan Sahara. We visit the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage designated Ksar Kasbah village of Ait Benhaddou, a fabulous sand castle standing in the middle of a field of flowering almond trees. We continue to the oasis of Ouarzazate, the administrative center of the pre-Saharan region for overnight at Le Temple Hotel.

We travel the 'Road of a Thousand Kasbahs', so named during its time as a medieval trade route. We drive through the Roses Valley to the Berber town of El Kelaa M'Gouna, renowned in Morocco



*Rooftop tanneries, Fes*

for its traditional hand-made Berber daggers. We continue via Tinghir and Tinejdad to Erfoud, where we change to 4WD vehicles to visit Merzouga, perched on the edge of the spectacular Erg Chebbi Sahara sand dunes, which boasts stunning sunsets over the seas of sands. We take a camel ride into the desert to admire the sunset and stay overnight at Chergui Tented Camp.

For early risers there is the opportunity to take a quad bike excursion into the dunes for sunrise, returning for breakfast, then we drive approx. 6 ½ hours through cedar forests and picturesque scenery to Fes, the religious capital of Morocco. We stay two nights at Palais Amani Riad.

We take a full day tour of Fes, the oldest of the four Imperial Cities. Founded approx. 809 A.D. it is the spiritual and intellectual capital of Islam in the west. We visit the

15th century Borj Nord arms museum, the great gateway of the Royal Palace, the Mellah (Jewish quarter), 9th century Karaouiyyine Mosque and University; with its Madrassas (colleges) of Bou Inania and Attarine dating from the 14th century, the shrine of Moulay Idriss II, founder of Fes, the Nejarine fountain. In the afternoon we continue with a visit to the spice market, the souks, the tannery and the Medina.



*Roman ruins at Volubilis, near Meknes*

We drive to Meknes, known as the Imperial City, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Meknes boasts Bab Mansour, easily the most beautiful Bab (gateway) of the Maghreb. We visit El Heri es-Souani - the granary of huge vaulted structures and famous state-owned Arabo-Berber ('Barb') stables of Haras; the Moulay Ismail Mausoleum and the Place el-Hedim. We continue to the Roman ruins at Volubilis where we see ancient olive presses, mansions, incredible mosaics, monumental arches and Corinthian columns.

We continue to Chefchaouen (600m) situated in the er-Rif Mountains and stay overnight at Lina Ryad & Spa. The houses are simple but decorated with white, turquoise, teal and powder-blue walls and doors of bright or cobalt blue, a tradition stemming from the town's former Jewish population. We walk through this delightful village, visiting the Palace El Makhzen and the famous square of Ouatta el Hammam; the maze of alleyways in the Medina; the crumbling ochre and toffee-coloured kasbah; and see the exterior of the El Masjid El Andalou with its octagonal mosque.

We drive to Tetouan, 'The White Dove of Culture', set on a rocky plateau detached from the southern flank of the Jbel Dersa overlooking the fertile Martil Valley. We visit Hassan II Square, reminiscent of Andalusia with its kiosks, fountains and flower boxes; the very characteristic and traditional walled Medina; the Museum of Moroccan Art, and the Bab el Oukla. We continue to Tangier and stay two nights at La Maison (or Hilton Tangier).

Tangier, the gateway to Africa, is the country's most cosmopolitan town and has a long history of intrigue and mystery - a medieval Medina, a vast, picturesque, vibrant souq - the 'Grand Socco'; tea houses; the Mendoubia Gardens;

Moulay Ismail Mosque, the Kasbah, the Méchouar, the Kasbah Square & Museum of Antiquities, the Forbes Museum the American Legation and the Merinid College, Caves d'Hercules and much more.

We transfer to the port for the regular ferry service to Algeciras (Spain) from where we transfer the short distance to the British Territory of Gibraltar for a two night stay at the iconic The Rock Hotel. Balance of the afternoon at leisure (or take an optional dolphin cruise) until we take the cable car to the top of the Rock for sunset views.

We depart for a morning tour visiting Europa Point, known as the Pillars of Hercules; the Nature Reserve - which is home to the Barbary ape; St. Michael's Cave and Princess Catherine's Battery, and the Moorish Castle's Tower of Homage. Balance of afternoon at leisure with time available to explore the township.



*The Rock, Gibraltar*

**Our journey ends on Sunday 19th May** with a transfer to Gibraltar airport for your chosen departure flight, or to the Spanish border, depending on your needs.

**Note:** This program is being co-led by Nick & Beant Deacock in traditional Far Horizons style, however tour costs exclude airfares (to give you the flexibility to choose your preferred airline and route to Casablanca and at the end of the tour), and also excludes lunches and dinners (which can be paid for directly each day).

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|---|----------|
| <b>Tariffs per person [share twin]</b>  |          |
| from Casablanca to Gibraltar            | \$11,020 |
| <b>Supplements</b>                      |          |
| Single room                             | \$ 3,595 |
| Excluding airfares, lunches and dinners |          |

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