



specialist
MOROCCO

Explore Southern Morocco

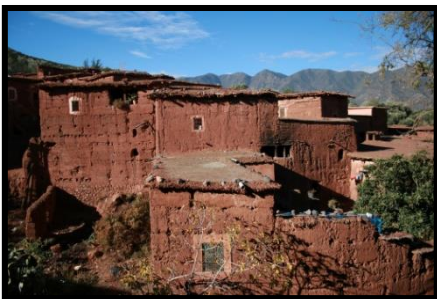
High Atlas, Sahara & Marrakech (8 days / 7 nights)

On this tour of Southern Morocco we travel in comfort by 4x4 Toyota Land Cruiser or Prado and sleep in style at an award-winning High Atlas retreat, a tented camp in the Sahara and a beautiful riad in the heart of Marrakech medina. First we spend time in the High Atlas experiencing Berber village life and walking trails in Toubkal National Park. Then we cross the dramatic Tizi n'Test pass and descend to the fertile Souss Valley.

Next we cross the desolate Anti-Atlas Mountains to reach the Moroccan Sahara desert. In the Sahara we explore by 4x4, on foot or by camel visiting oases with abundant date palms and mud-built Berber villages, traversing wind-swept dunes and gazing at the most amazing star-filled African skies. Finally we traverse the Draa Valley to reach the World Heritage-listed Ksar of Ait Benhaddou before descending the High Atlas to reach magical Marrakech.

Trip Highlights

- Exploring the Azzaden Valley
- Experiencing typical Berber life
- Crossing the High Atlas Mountains
- Anti-Atlas Mountains traverse
- Driving the Draa Valley
- Sahara desert adventure
- Visit Ksar of Ait Benhaddou
- The medina of magical Marrakech



ITINERARY

Daily Summary

Day 1 – Drive to High Atlas (Kasbah Africa)
Day 2 – Explore High Atlas (Kasbah Africa) B
Day 3 – In the High Atlas (Kasbah Africa) B
Day 4 – Drive to Sahara (Desert Camp) BD
Day 5 – Explore Sahara (Desert Camp) BLD
Day 6 – Drive to Marrakech (Riad Africa) B
Day 7 – Explore Marrakech (Riad Africa) B
Day 8 – Check Out B

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

Day 1 – Drive to Kasbah Africa in Atlas Mountains

Our journey begins from Marrakech as we travel south through the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains to Kasbah Africa, a mountain retreat perched in the Azzaden Valley above the river and close to the Berber village of Torort.

The first part of the journey is flat and straight as we leave the ever-growing suburbs of Marrakech to reach the regional administrative town of Tahanoute. Soon you'll notice a distinct drop in air temperature as we twist and turn on our ascent into the High Atlas Mountains.

Next we reach Moulay Brahim, a popular riverside picnic place for Moroccan day trippers. Here there is the option to take a 2 hour Atlas camel trek, following a designated scenic trail for camels to the old village of Asni (pre-booking is essential). We continue to the Berber market town of Asni and make a stop to visit the market (Saturday is the main market day). Asni has an ATM and several 'hanuts' – local roadside grocery shops. Finally we reach Marigha where the real adventure begins as head off-road and follow a twisting 3 km dirt/stone track up the picturesque Azzaden Valley to reach Kasbah Africa. **70 km / 44 miles / 1.5 hours**

Days 2 & 3 – Explore the High Atlas Mountains

Sitting at an altitude of 1,100 metres close to Toubkal National Park, Kasbah Africa is the best located lodge in the Azzaden Valley. For an unrivalled appreciation of the jagged beauty of North Africa's highest mountain range the views from Kasbah Africa are hard to beat.

The High Atlas, the greatest mountain range of North Africa, is perhaps the most beautiful and intriguing part of Morocco. It has retained a remoteness which until recent decades was virtually complete and contains villages where the way of life has changed little for centuries. Outsiders to the mountains are constantly surprised when they encounter the friendliness and openness of the villagers as they go about their everyday tasks. Hiking in the High Atlas is one of the best experiences in Morocco.

Regardless of levels of fitness this area is accessible to all with a wide range of walking possibilities, from a short ramble through the village and valley to more demanding day hikes or major treks. Mules can also be hired and a guide is always available at Kasbah Africa should you wish to walk. The trails around the Azzaden Valley and Ouirgane are well contoured and kept in excellent condition.

Day 4 – Across the Anti-Atlas to the Sahara

We make an early start from Kasbah Africa and return to Marigha to re-join the main road south. The first place of interest today is the pretty village of Ouirgane and its reservoir. There's also time to visit the Mosque at Tin Mal. Next we make a dramatic traverse of the High Atlas Mountains, ascending a twisting and turning mountain road to the Tizi n'Test Pass (2,092m) passing numerous Berber villages clinging to the slopes. After time to gaze at the spectacular views of the Souss Valley down below we continue through ever-changing scenery with the Jebel Siroua range to the north and the Anti-Atlas to the south.

We reach the colourful Berber town of Tazenakht, known for its carpets, and an ideal staging post for lunch. In the afternoon we cross the Anti-Atlas on a remote drive and reach Agdz in the Draa Valley. At Agdz the stunning Draa

Valley begins. Lined with Kasbahs, Ksour and irrigated palm groves, a drive through the valley is regarded by many as one of the most scenic journeys in Morocco.

The River Draa starts in the High Atlas and has, over many years, cut a channel between the Jebel Saghro and the Anti-Atlas mountain ranges, making sheer canyons famous for their colourful rocks. Arabs, Berbers, Jews and descendants of Mauritanian slaves all live in the valley, which is scattered with old fortified villages, known as 'Ksour' where the villagers lived to protect themselves from marauding nomads.

After a stop in Zagora, once the final stop-off for caravans before they entered the endless solitude of the Hamada's, we'll enjoy a tour of the great Islamic learning centre of Tamegroute to see a collection of priceless manuscripts in the Koranic Library. The final stretch of today's journey will take us to Ait Isfoul where we head off-road to arrive at Sahara Safari Camp, a Moroccan desert retreat situated between an ancient Kasbah and sweeping dunes near the village of Ait Isfoul. **510 km / 319 miles / 8 hours**

Day 5 – Exploring the Moroccan Sahara

Here in the deep south of Morocco in the region of the southern Draa Valley and M'hamid the Sahara Desert is a beguiling wilderness of palm-filled oases, vast sand dunes, ancient lake-beds, camel caravans, adobe mud-brick villages and men in blue. Located near the village of Ait Isfoul and accessible by camel, on foot or by 4x4 it is here that the stylish Sahara Safari Camp is located. Set between dunes and date palm trees with a dramatic mesa backdrop, guests are assured of daytime adventure and restful nights in real comfort.

Bounded by the Moroccan Sahara Desert the camp is set in a stunning location surrounded by incredibly varied landscapes. Excursions can be taken on foot or by camel to nearby oases, villages, flat-topped mesas and towering dunes. Alternatively take a 4x4 day trip to the dunes of Chegaga located to the west of M'hamid. For wildlife enthusiasts, desert fox, gerbil and a variety of bird species are regularly seen close to camp.

Day 6 – From the Sahara to Marrakech

Today we make an early start to drive to Marrakech. We first follow the Draa Valley north to Agdz and then cross the barren Jebel Saghro to arrive at Ouarzazate, home to one of the largest movie studios in the world where several famous movies have been set, including "Gladiator", "Alexander" and "Kingdom of Heaven". Next we visit Ait Benhaddou, 30 km from Ouarzazate. Inscribed by UNESCO in 1987 as a 'World Heritage Site', the Ksar of Ait Benhaddou is a striking example of the architecture of southern Morocco.

The Ksar, a group of earthen buildings surrounded by high walls, is a traditional pre-Saharan habitat. The houses crowd together within the defensive walls, which are reinforced by corner towers. Later in the afternoon you'll enjoy a scenic journey to Marrakech through the High Atlas Mountains via the Tizi n'Tichka Pass (2,260m). Here in this part of the Atlas, Berber villages cling to the steep red earth slopes and fossil traders vie for passing tourist trade. Reaching the World Heritage-listed Marrakech medina it is a short walk from the Jewish 'Mellah' quarter to your accommodation at Riad Africa. **430 km / 269 miles / 7 hours**

Day 7 – Discover Marrakech

With palaces and palm groves, rose gardens, and a backdrop of the snow-capped peaks of the High Atlas Mountains, Marrakech is the capital of the Moroccan South, a cultural crossroads and keeper of tradition and folklore. The ancient pink-walled medina contains a wealth of rich architectural heritage, and the real highlight - Place Djemaa el Fna - is like no other square in the world. Marrakech is simply jam-packed with things to do and a week would certainly do this fabulous city justice.

As well as numerous cultural attractions in the old medina, Marrakech has a great range of outdoor activities on offer including quad biking, buggy adventures, horse and camel-riding excursions. Helicopter and balloon flights operate throughout much of the year (depending on weather conditions) and offer a superb bird's eye view of the Red City. Should you wish to chill out for the day by a large pool in an out-of-town tropical setting, take your pick from Nikki Beach, Plage Rouge or the Beldi Country Club. Families may enjoy a visit to Oasiria, a water park with beach. For first time visitors to the medina of Marrakech, a great way of getting to grips with this magical city is on a guided sightseeing tour.

The famous souks of Marrakech offer an intoxicating passage to Africa's most famous meeting place - the huge medieval square of Djemaa el Fna. Here at the heart of the old city acrobats and jugglers, snake charmers, beggars, boxers, musicians, fresh juice and food sellers all compete for your attention - and a few dirham's in the process. It is easy to spend several hours wandering the square, sipping mint tea and savouring the utter assault on your senses. As night falls take a seat in one of the restaurants that overlook the square and watch the scene unfold. With the conflicting sounds from musicians and singers, and thousands of tiny white lights illuminating swirling smoke rising from food stalls, expect a night you'll never forget!

Day 8 – Tour ends in Marrakech

Transfer to Marrakech airport where holiday ends.

ACCOMMODATION

Kasbah Africa – Atlas Nature Retreat

Sahara Safari Camp – Moroccan Desert Retreat

Riad Africa – Marrakech Medina Retreat

The Moroccan Retreats Collection

www.kasbahafrica.com

www.saharasafaricamp.co.uk

www.riadafrica.co.uk

www.moroccanretreats.com

ADDITIONAL DAYS & ALTERNATIVE NIGHTS

If you wish to extend your holiday by including extra nights at Riad Africa at the end of your tour, or perhaps include additional nights either at Kasbah Africa or Sahara Safari Camp please contact us for a quote.

Should you wish to lengthen this itinerary to include a night or two at other destinations such as Taroudant (between Kasbah Africa and Sahara Safari Camp), Chegaga (for a night in the really remote wilderness of the Sahara) or Ouarzazate/Ait Benhaddou (between Sahara and Marrakech) please call or email us for a quote.

PRICE INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS

- **INCLUDED** - Transfer by 4x4 from Marrakech to Kasbah Africa; hire of 4x4 including driver, fuel, taxes, tolls, driver expenses from Kasbah Africa to Sahara to Marrakech; transfer from Riad Africa to Marrakech airport; accommodation in standard en-suite rooms and tents on twin-share basis with meals as stated in this itinerary.
- **EXCLUDED** - Flights, personal travel insurance, room/tent upgrades; local guides; entrance fees; beverages; meals not specified; tips and items of a personal nature.

HOLIDAY & LOCAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

In addition to the itinerary and information contained in this dossier, before you travel abroad we recommend that you read the advice and warnings contained in our [Essential Holiday Information Guide](#) and our destination information sheet: [Morocco Practical Travel Information](#).

JOINING INFORMATION

Comprehensive joining instructions (including local emergency numbers) and details of the joining point of your tour will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION



Specialist Morocco is a trading name of Specialist Africa Ltd (a company registered in England and Wales, No. 7024404). Specialist Africa is a member of the [Travel Trust Association](#) (No. U7736). By us being a member of this association provides you with 100% financial protection, irrespective of which country you book or travel from.