

Trip Dossier for Morocco – Desert Discovery

Trip Code: FMDD Issue date: 22 Nov 2007 Valid from: 01 January 2008

Please Note: Since the publication of our 2008 brochure the return date has changed. For operational reasons the return date is a day later than shown in the brochure.

Day 1 Fly to Ouarzazate

You depart from London on the flight to Ouarzazate, via Casablanca. You will be met at the airport and taken to your hotel in Ouarzazate, your jumping off point for the desert. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Days 2 to 3 Drive to the Dades Gorge

Travelling east from Ouarzazate, the route takes you into the Dades river valley set between the High Atlas and Djebel Sarhro mountains, with rough red rocks rising above refreshing verdant oases and ornate kasbahs. You'll visit one of these along the way and you will also have an opportunity to take a walk, perhaps amongst the fruit, olive and almond trees interspersed with irrigation channels. El Kelaa Mgouna is known for its rose water, the bushes in spring break up the palm groves with a bright splash of colour. At Boumaine the road becomes like a switchback as you travel through the gorge with stunning views on either side down to the very bottom. Ksour and kasbahs cluster along the route as it opens out. The gorge narrows at Ait Oudinar where you will spend the next two nights. From here you will explore on foot and visit local villages. Hopefully, there will be a chance to join in with some Berber singing, dancing and drumming this evening. **Auberge (breakfast & dinner)**

Uniquely Berber the ksar (pl. ksour) is a fortified tribal village built of pise, the clay of the riverbanks, and hence liable to wash away in the rains. The kasbah is a single family dwelling or the chief's palace and can be part of the ksar. As they are cheap to build, they can readily be replaced if erosion takes its toll

Days 4 to 5 Visit Rissani market and head into the Sahara

Today you will pass by the famous Todra Gorge as you leave the mountains and head into the desert. Soon you may notice the sand encroaching on the road. Oases and kasbahs punctuate the route until Mellab, when the desert takes over. As you drop into the Ziz River Valley so the palm trees become abundant and you arrive in Erfoud, a typical desert town of sandstone buildings. Nearby on three days a week the quiet town of Rissani springs into action for the market. There will be time to stop and browse in the souk, known for its Berber jewellery. As you approach Merzouga, you will be driving through a flat stony landscape, but look out for the dunes as they begin to rise higher and higher. One hundred and fifty feet at their highest, constantly shifting and growing, the dunes here are the largest in Morocco. This is endless entertainment for the children in the largest sandpit you can imagine. The best time to see the dunes is at sunrise or sunset so be prepared for an early start; it's worth it for the magnificence of the early morning light on the dunes, their crests stretching into the distance. On your walk here, look out for Algerian sand lizards and desert mammals such as the hedgehog and fox. Birdwatchers will also have much to see. Ride a camel and gain another perspective as you sway from side to side. And watch your guide bake bread in the sand. You will be amazed at how he makes the fire, spreads it out and places the dough straight on to the ashes before covering it up with sand. When cooked he will carefully pick off the last grain and speck of ash and you can be sure nothing will ever taste more delicious. **Camping in the desert (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 6 Drive to Tazzarine desert camp

Rocks and fossils are on the menu today. Near Alnif, roadside sellers will offer you large trilobites mined from the surrounding escarpments. These are older than ammonite and range from the size of your hand to two inches long with a crab-like outer skeleton. Ammonites, sliced and polished spirals, and spherical crystals in a hollow geode can also be found but beware fakes. Leaving Alnif the road becomes rougher and wilder until you reach the oasis of Tazzarine. Enjoy having mint tea with a local family served in a traditional Moroccan way. The mint is steeped in boiling water in a teapot with a long curved spout, then poured from a great height into a tiny glass, tasted several times, returned to the pot, then poured again. Copious amounts of sugar are added each time until it is just right and you are served your foaming brew. Tonight you will be sleeping in Nomad tents. **Camping (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 7 Return to Ouarzazate

After your desert adventure, it is time to make the journey back to Ouarzazate, with a stop in Agdz for some souvenir shopping, especially carpets, and a spot of lunch; your tour leader will make a few recommendations. The road back to



Ourzazate is arid but quite dramatic cutting through the Jbel Sarhro range. En route, you stop to visit another kasbah. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 8 In Ouarzazate and visit Ait Ben Haddou

From Ouarzazate there's time for one last adventure to a wonderful old kasbah. It is easy to see why film producers pick Ait Ben Haddou for such movies as *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Jesus of Nazareth*. It is also a UNESCO world heritage site. Standing on the ancient caravan route through the Atlas mountains, this fortified city or 'ksar' has grown up over the last five hundred years, its location dominating the landscape for miles around. Deep red sun-baked kasbahs are elaborately decorated and crenellated, perched one above another hugging the mountain slope. Back in Ourzazate there will be time to finish your shopping in the Centre Artisanal or perhaps take a trip to the Atlas Film Corporation Studios where you can see the sets (not included) for *Jewel on the Nile*, *Kundun* and *Asterix*. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 9 Fly to London

The flight back to London leaves Ouarzazate in the early morning, and flies via Casablanca, arriving in London mid afternoon.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance. Consequently there are factors over which we have no control and which could make changes necessary. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes in advance.

Glossary

agadir	granary
ait	tribe
dar	house
djellabah	long, hooded garment
erg	sand dune
jbel	mountain
jorf	cliff
kasbah	castle/fortified residence
ksar (pl. ksour)	fortified village/town
medina	town
oued	river
pise	river mud-clay mixed with straw or rubble for buildings
riad	internal garden
souk	market/stall
tizi	mountain pass

Is this right for your family? This trip is designed for kids from the age of five and up. To get off the beaten track we use a mix of modest hotels, auberges and desert camps. There are no demanding activities, but life in the desert can sometimes appear harsh. This is a real adventure – an alternative way of exploring the desert to our Sahara Dune Adventure. Transport is by minibus and four-wheeled drive vehicle.

Climate In general Morocco experiences hot, dry summers and mild winters. In the area of this trip you can expect rather hot daytime temperatures at either end of the season (October and April), but really pleasant temperatures at Christmas. Temperatures rarely drop below freezing, but you must be prepared for very cold conditions at nights. Rain is very unlikely but nevertheless you must be suitably equipped as it does occur from time to time and can be very impressive when it happens. Dust/sand storms can also occur without warning and it is best to be equipped with a 'shesh', as worn by the desert people; these are available for sale cheaply at Rissanni or Ourzazate.

Average monthly temperatures in Ouarzazate.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	18	20	22	25	28	33	37	36	33	27	22	17
Min °C	5	8	9	11	14	17	20	19	19	15	9	7
Rainfall (mm)	29	30	31	33	20	7	2	2	10	17	27	33



Accommodation In Ouarzazate we use three star hotel where accommodation is on a share twin basis, and children will be expected to share with their parents. In The Dades gorge you will be accommodated in a simple 'Auberge'. In Erg Chebbi and Tazzarine you will sleep in 2-person nomad tents with sleeping mats.

Food Moroccan food is excellent. First class fresh produce, with the subtle addition of herbs and spices, is used to produce innumerable tagines (stews), meschoui (roast lamb), couscous and pastilla (pigeon pie). The fresh fruit is delicious, and so are Moroccan cakes and pastries.

While camping fresh fruit and vegetables are used to produce hearty meals, mostly tagines and couscous, but you can also expect some pasta based dishes. Bread is always available and will be baked over open fires at the overnight camps. We provide tea, coffee, mint tea and hot chocolate, at the beginning and end of each day. Iodine based sterilising tablets or Lugol's iodine solution is essential and you will be expected to take responsibility for sterilising your personal drinking water.

Bottled mineral water is readily available in the cities and towns, but may not always be available in the desert. Soft fizzy drinks are very common in Morocco. As Morocco is a Muslim country you will only be able to buy beer in the main tourist centres. Vegetarians will usually find that there is generally little difficulty as long as they are prepared to be reasonably flexible. However they may have to make polite, subtle excuses if they are guests in a village house as it is rude to refuse food that is offered, but it is usually quite easy to 'pretend' to eat with the group.

Local Costs in Morocco

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.50
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.80
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.75
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.00
A bottle of beer	£1.70
Tea or coffee	£0.60
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£3.50
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£5.00
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£7.00

*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Currency The Moroccan unit of currency is the Dirham (DH). At the time of writing (Oct 2007) £1 = 16 DH. You will need to change all the money that you will need for the trip at the start in Ouarzazate or at the airport.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each person should allow £2 per day to cover the tips for the Moroccan trekking team.

Language The official language of Morocco is Moroccan Arabic. There are also three separate Berber languages, one of which - Tashalhait - is the traditional language of High Atlas and Sous Valley Berbers. French is widely spoken, but little English.

Time Moroccan time is GMT all year round.

Cultural Shock As Morocco is a Muslim country we do ask all participants to consider how they dress in cities and villages. It is expected that women will cover legs and shoulders, although, as Morocco becomes more westernised, even the local people are becoming more relaxed about this. In the desert, shorts are accepted for walking, but both men and women should wear trousers or a long skirt when staying in the villages. Please do not simply look at other tourists and feel that what they wear is correct – you will never know what the local people think of them. To gain respect from the Moroccan people you should show that you are trying to respect their culture. If in doubt at any time, please consult your tour leader.

Packing List Please refer to our separate "packing list"



Clothing & Equipment List for Morocco – Desert Discovery

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A set of light casual clothes will be useful on this holiday. In the desert you must not worry about how you look: comfort and protection against bad weather and the sun are of prime importance. Because desert weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment in the desert, and they can be left as gifts for the local staff at the end of the trip. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Boots/shoes	1 pair		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Sleeping Bag (3 seasons/4 season at Christmas)	
Socks	2 thick and 2 thin		Sleeping Bag Liner (cotton or silk)	
Jacket	1 lightweight		Lightweight Daypack- 25 litres	
Underwear	4+		A variety of large plastic bags	
Thermal Underwear	Essential in winter		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3 +		First Aid Kit	
Long Walking Trousers or Skirt	2 +		Large Water Bottle	
Short Trousers	2		Water Purifying Tablets	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Neutralising Tablets	
Track Suit Bottoms	Optional		Torch and Batteries	
Thick Fleece	Essential in winter		Camera, Film and Accessories	
Warm wind-proof jacket	1		Washing Kit – “dry” hand-wash & wet wipes	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Reading Material	
Sunhat / Baseball cap /Shesh* (*nomad bandana)	1		Loo Kit (in small bag) toilet paper/tissues	
Warm Hat and gloves	Woolly or fleece (winter only)		Bicycle Helmet – recommend for kids riding on camels	
Swim Wear	Optional		Walking pole(s) – optional	
Towel or Sarong				

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa (if required)		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Penknife (not in hand luggage)	
Cash Cards/Visa		Small Calculator	
Insurance Documents		Sweets and Snacks	
Trip Information And Itinerary		Cold Water Detergent	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Biodegradable Soap	
Spectacles/Contact Lenses		Spare Boot Laces/Wax	
Sunscreen – Lots of it		Earplugs	
Moisturising Cream & Lip salve – not in hand luggage		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
Insect Repellent		Guide Book & map	
Tooth Paste/Floss		Toilet Paper / Tissues	
Small Cotton Pillow Case – pop in towel for pillow		Small presents for local kids – biros, balloons, books	
Scissor/Mirror/Nail Clippers – not in hand luggage		Small toys and books for your children	

For details regarding hand luggage restrictions, please visit www.baa.com for details or click [here](#)

