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19 Day Morocco – The Grand Tour



ESCORTED ITINERARY – PRE-SET DATES – NON-FLEXIBLE INCLUSIONS

A Celebrity Escorted Tour

Detailed Itinerary: Included meals are shown with the letters B, L and D. 9820DBL

Tuesday 3 April: Arrive Casablanca & drive to Rabat

For passengers who have booked their flights through Academy Travel to commence the tour today your tour leaders will be waiting at Casablanca airport outside the terminal near the arrivals exit before we depart by coach for the 90-minute drive to Rabat. For other clients there will be different meeting arrangements. On arrival in Rabat we settle into our riad and there is time for an orientation walk in the medina before welcome drinks and dinner in the hotel.
Overnight Rabat (D)

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Wednesday 4 April: Rabat

This morning we visit the archaeological site of Chellah, once the Roman trading post of Sala Colonia, which was later used as a royal burial ground by the 13th and 14th century rulers of the Almohad and Merenid dynasties. Alongside the Roman ruins are the remains of a mosque and *zaouia* (religious seminary) with bright *zellij* tilework on the minaret and several tombs, including that of the great Merenid sultan, Abou el Hassan. We continue to the Archaeological Museum, which houses a magnificent collection of Roman bronzes, found mainly at Volubilis. After lunch we visit the imposing tower of the ruined 12th century Hassan mosque, in its time the second largest in the Islamic world, which dominates the city. Alongside is the grand modern mausoleum of Mohammad V, who died in 1961, which was designed by a Vietnamese architect. We stop at the Kasbah des Oudaïas which features 12th century fortifications, an Andalusian garden, narrow streets, charming whitewashed houses and a view across the Bou Regreg estuary to the old walled town of Salé on the other side. Overnight Rabat (B, L)

Thursday 5 April: Lixus & Tangier

This morning we leave Rabat to drive along the coast to Tangier. We stop to visit the picturesque although rather overgrown ruins of ancient Lixus, founded by the Phoenicians and in Roman times a wealthy port famous for the production of salt and *garum*, a pungent fish sauce which featured in many a Roman recipe. The *garum* factories are in the lower town and on the way to the acropolis are the public baths and the amphitheatre where wild beast shows and gladiatorial contests were once staged. After lunch at a restaurant by the sea we continue to Tangier. There is time for a short orientation walk before checking into our hotel. Overnight Tangier (B, L)

Friday 6 April: Tangier

We spend today exploring Tangier beginning with the American Legation Museum, the United States' first overseas consulate, an historic building with an interesting art collection and a section dedicated to American composer and writer Paul Bowles who spent most his life in the city. We wander through the winding streets of the medina passing by the Hotel Continental, which opened in 1872, with the future Edward VII among the first guests and the house which belonged to Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton. The kasbah, at the top of the hill, houses a splendid museum in the Dar el Makhzen, the former residence of the sultan. In the Ville Nouvelle we see the churchyard of St. Andrews Anglican Church, where several well-known expatriate Tangerinos are buried and the Café de Paris, famous rendezvous during the International Zone era. There is time to relax before enjoying dinner. Overnight Tangier (B, D)

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Saturday 7 April: Chefchaouen

Today we travel through the Rif to Chefchaouen, a delightful small walled town set against the backdrop of the mountains and defined by its blue-washed buildings with red-tiled roofs, adorned with pots of flowers. There is time to wander round the compact medina and visit the kasbah, which has a small garden and museum, before we have lunch and check into our centrally-located riad. The afternoon is free for relaxation and further exploration. Overnight Chefchaouen (B, L)

Sunday 8 April: Fes

A morning drive through lovely countryside takes us from Chefchaouen to Fes, where we stop first for a panoramic view of the old city. After lunch we visit the Musée Batha, a converted 19th century palace with pleasant gardens and an excellent collection of arts and crafts including wood carving, metalwork, costumes and pottery. Before driving to our hotel we walk through the Mellah, the old Jewish quarter, where the old houses are distinguished by their wooden shutters and wood and wrought iron balconies. Dinner this evening is in our hotel. Overnight Fes (B, L, D)

Monday 9 April: Fes

Entering through the Bab Boujeloud, one of the gates in the old city walls, we begin our exploration of Fes el Bali medina with a visit to the Medersa Bou Inania, a masterpiece of Merenid architecture, with intricate stucco and cedarwood carving and complex *zellij* tile decoration. We walk through the souks and alleyways of the medina passing shops and stalls selling foodstuffs, perfumes, hardware, clothing, shoes and slippers, silks, embroidery and spices, taking time to visit old *fondouks* or caravanserais, some of which are still used as warehouses and workshops by local artisans. We look around the area of the great Kairouine mosque and from a terrace to view the fascinating tanneries where the age-old methods of treating and dyeing the hides continue. Lunch is independent and the afternoon is free for further exploration. Overnight Fes (B)

Tuesday 10 April: Volubilis and Local Winery

This morning we drive from Fes to the archaeological site of Volubilis, once capital of the Roman Province of Mauretania, picturesquely located on a high ridge overlooking the fertile valley below. We take a leisurely walk through the ruins, past an industrial area where several olive oil presses have been found to the city centre with the forum, capitol and basilica and an imposing triumphal arch. The streets beyond are lined with grand private houses, many of which still have their beautiful mosaic floors in situ. Near the entrance is a museum with numerous finds from the site and excellent explanations. After our visit we drive to a local winery, where

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we sample the wines and enjoy a delicious lunch. There is time to visit the cellars and vineyards before returning to Fes. Overnight Fes (B, L)

Wednesday 11 April: Ifrane and The Middle Atlas

This morning we depart for the Middle Atlas, stopping first at Sefrou, a small and relaxed historic market town. We walk through the medina and adjacent Mellah, the former Jewish quarter, before driving a few kilometres to the fascinating Berber village of Bhalil with its network of troglodyte dwellings. After a stroll around the village we continue to the Domaine de la Pommeraiie where we visit the farm and enjoy a light lunch tasting the goat and sheep cheese and other local produce. After lunch we drive south through Ifrane towards Azrou and take the Route des Cèdres, which cuts through forests of Atlas cedar and holm oak and where we hope to catch a glimpse of the Barbary macaques, also known as Barbary apes, which are native to the Middle Atlas. We drive back to Ifrane, a mountain resort which was popular with the French during the Protectorate. Overnight Ifrane (B, L, D)

Thursday 12 April: Marrakesh

We depart for the long drive to Marrakesh, stopping at the women's cooperative of Oued Ifrane to see examples of local carpet weaving. We have lunch en route and check into our hotel on arrival in Marrakesh. Overnight Marrakesh (B, L, D).

Friday 13 April: Marrakesh

We spend all day exploring Marrakesh, beginning with the Saadian tombs built in the 16th century by Sultan Ahmed el Mansour, who spared no expense on his mausoleum, importing Italian Carrara marble and gilding the decorative plasterwork with pure gold. We visit the ruins of the Badi Palace, commissioned by the same sultan, which has sunken gardens in the central court. A pavilion houses the original wooden minbar from the Koutoubia Mosque, a masterpiece of 12th century Moorish art which was built in Cordoba. Walking through the streets of the Mellah, the old Jewish quarter, we come to the 19th century Bahia palace, built by Si Moussa, a black slave who became grand vizier. The palace has beautiful painted wooden ceilings and courtyard gardens. A stroll through narrow streets and alleys brings us to Jemaa el Fna, the lively main square, overlooked by the Koutoubia minaret, one of the symbols of the city. After an independent lunch we wander through the colourful souks north of the square and visit the Ben Youssef Medersa, a 14th century Koranic school embellished with exquisite carved stucco and cedarwood and *zellij* tiles. We end our day at Le Jardin Secret, a restored 19th century palace and garden. Overnight Marrakesh (B)

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Saturday 14 April: Marrakesh

This morning we travel a short distance outside Marrakesh to visit the Anima Garden, established by Viennese multi-media artist André Heller, a botanical garden with modern sculpture exhibits set against the backdrop of the Atlas Mountains. We return to Marrakesh and the lovely Jardin Majorelle, designed by French artists Jacques and Louis Majorelle in the 1940s and bought and saved by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé in 1980. There is a small Yves Saint Laurent museum dedicated to his artwork and a Berber museum in Jacques Majorelle's former cubist painting studio. The afternoon is free for relaxation or further exploration. Overnight Marrakesh (B, D)

Sunday 15 April: Ouarzazate

Today we enjoy spectacular scenery as we cross the High Atlas Mountains over the winding Tiz n'Tichka pass. We stop for lunch at Ait Benhaddou, where Lawrence of Arabia was filmed. The *ksar* or fortified old town, now largely abandoned but protected as a heritage site, is a striking example of southern Moroccan mudbrick architecture. We continue to Ouarzazate where we visit the splendid Taourirt Kasbah, former residence of the pasha of Marrakesh, Thami el Glaoui, before checking into our hotel. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L, D)

Monday 16 April: Drâa Valley

We spend a full day driving south along the Drâa valley, part of the ancient caravan route for the trade in gold, salt and slaves across the Sahara. It is a long fertile strip dotted with date palm oases and fortified towns and villages which runs below a high ridge of the Anti-Atlas Mountains. We take a break at Agdz to visit the *caïd's* kasbah, with stunning views from the rooftop over the neighbouring oasis. At Tamnougalt the *ksar*, one of the oldest in Morocco, is a spectacular maze of buildings decorated with different motifs. We have lunch at Zagora where we see the palmery of Amazrou, the Kasbah of the Jews and the Museum of Art and Traditions of the Drâa Valley before returning to Ouarzazate. Overnight Ouarzazate (B, L)

Tuesday 17 April: Taroudant

This morning we have a beautiful drive to Taroudant, stopping for a late lunch at the Riad Hida in Ouled Berhil. On arrival in Taroudant we check into our hotel and take a late afternoon stroll around the elegant little town with its circuit of warm reddish-brown walls. We visit the Arab Souk which sells fruit and vegetables and traditional handicrafts. Overnight Taroudant (B, L)

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Wednesday 18 April: Essaouira

Our morning begins at the Thursday market outside the walls, where Berbers come from the local villages to sell their produce and some crafts. We then drive to the Atlantic coast and the harbour town of Essaouira with lunch en route. After checking into our hotel there is time to relax before we gather in the beachfront bar for drinks and watch the sun set into the Atlantic. Overnight Essaouira (B, L, D)

Thursday 19 April: Essaouira

Our visit to Essaouira, an 18th century town surrounded by impressive ramparts built by a French military architect, begins at the harbour, where every morning the fishing boats bring in the catch to be sold at the nearby market. We walk along the ramparts by the Skala bastion for views across the ocean and stroll through the medina with its whitewashed houses, woodworkers' and jewellers' souks and former Jewish Mellah. The afternoon is at leisure to relax, swim in the Atlantic Ocean or further explore the medina. Overnight Essaouira (B)

Friday 20 April: El Jadida and Casablanca

Leaving Essaouira this morning we travel along the scenic coastal road stopping for lunch at El Jadida, where the old Portuguese medina, founded in 1513 and held until 1769, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. After lunch we walk along the ramparts and through the streets to see the Church of the Assumption and the minaret of the Grand Mosque which once acted as a lighthouse. We continue to Casablanca where we gather together in the evening for a farewell dinner. Overnight Casablanca (B, L, D)

Saturday 21 April: Depart Casablanca

There is a transfer to the airport this morning for passengers who have booked their flights with Academy Travel (B)

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Celebrity Host: Sue Rollin

Holds degrees in Near Eastern history and archaeology, South Asian studies and interpreting. Sue has led tours in India, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Sue Rollin is an archaeologist, historian and linguist with 30 years' experience in leading tours to Central Asia, India, the Middle East and countries around the Mediterranean. Her personal interests include art and architecture, comparative religion, gastronomy and walking.

Sue has a BA and MA from the University of London, a Diploma in Conference Interpreting from the University of Westminster and held a 2-year research scholarship at Heidelberg University. She has worked as a tutor and lecturer in Ancient Near Eastern history at both Cambridge and London Universities and continues to lecture on a variety of topics for the Art Fund, Arts Society and the Victoria and Albert Museum's adult learning programme. In Australia Sue has done 3 lecture tours for ADFAS, with a fourth one in the pipeline for 2019. She speaks French, German, Spanish and Italian (and a little Russian, Arabic and Turkish) and works regularly for international organisations such as the European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations.

Sue's historical knowledge covers a long time frame, from the ancient world to modern times. She is particularly interested in cultural interaction as she and her group explore the rich legacy of ancient Greece and Rome, visit the splendid monuments of the Arab and Berber dynasties of North Africa, Andalusia and the Middle East, admire the glittering mosaics of Norman Sicily, delight in the superb architecture and decorative arts of the Ottoman empire and Central Asia and experience the colourful diversity of Mughal and Hindu India.

Since Sue led her first tour of Classical Turkey in 1987, she has designed and led over 60 cultural tours in 10 countries and 3 continents and travelled in many more.

We asked Sue, what motivates you as a tour leader?

"I enjoy meeting adventurous and open-minded travellers and renewing old acquaintances, sharing my knowledge as we visit interesting sites, travel through beautiful landscapes and chat and exchange ideas over a drink or a delicious meal. It is a privilege to be able to introduce others to some of my favourite places," says Sue, "and to share some unforgettable experiences."

"My fellow travellers often comment on my energy and enthusiasm and I hope that when they return home they take back with them positive memories of the places we have visited and the

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people we have met. Prepare to be surprised, feel inspired, learn something new, relax, have fun and make new friends – these are just a few of the benefits of our travels.”

End of Services.

Ready to plan your journey? Contact us today ! 678-500-9548

Schedule Your Creative Planning Session Now!