

The Imperial Cities

This tour is dedicated to the travelers that are fascinated by the history. Visit the imperial cities of Morocco, covering the four historical capitals: Fez, Marrakech, Meknes, and Rabat, the current capital of Morocco. These cities represent capitals at different times and by different monarchs from the Moroccan dynasties.

Day - 5 Marrakech

Marrakech (B, D)

After breakfast, your guide will meet you at the hotel for a full day guided tour of Marrakech. Marrakech was founded in 1062 by one of the chieftains of the Almoravid king Youssuf Ibn Tashfin. The Almoravids were desert warriors, very much attached to their Islamic religion; the original garrison developed very quickly into a city where numerous mosques and madrasas (Koranic schools) were built. Andalusian craftsmen built and decorated several palaces, merging their style with the Saharan and African traditions, which gave the city a distinctive architectural flavour. Nowadays, Marrakech is a vibrant city which exhibits a curious blend of the ancient and the modern, allowing travellers the chance to experience the genuine medieval atmosphere of the old medina, and visit the trendiest bars, art galleries and restaurants in the French Quarter, Guéliz, built at the beginning of the 20th Century, all in one day. Highlights of your visit will include:

El Bahia Palace Built in the late 19th Century, and decorated by the best artisans of Morocco at the time, this palace – intended to be the most magnificent of its age – features an exquisite blend of Andalusian and Moorish styles. Specially interesting are the harem apartments, the trapezoidal garden, and a huge tiled courtyard with fountains.

The Koutoubia Mosque Built by the Almohads in the late years of 12th Century, the Koutoubia Mosque, and specially its minaret, is the most important landmark of Marrakech, and a symbol of the city itself. The minaret served as model for the Giralda in Sevilla and the unfinished Tour Hassan in Rabat, all three being designed by the same architect. Koutoubia means 'booksellers', as the trade of books was concentrated in the neighbourhood during the Middle Ages. The minaret of the Koutoubia, 77 meters high, is visible from almost any point of the city – an old ordinance, still in force, forbids any building of Marrakech to surpass the Koutoubia minaret in height.

Djemaa El Fna, the Square Nobody knows for certain of the origin of this square, whose name evokes, in Arabic, the contradictory notions of assembly or gathering, and that of absence. Probably as old as the city itself, it was a place for public executions during the day, and the meeting point of musicians, mystics, food sellers, pickpockets, acrobats, snake charmers, storytellers, dancers, fortune tellers and other exotic characters at night (happily enough, nowadays it only retains its more playful aspect). Watching sunset from one of its terraces when the call to prayer from the Koutoubia minaret fills the air is one of these 'zen' moments that Morocco offers – do not miss it! Despite its lack of significant monuments, Djemaa el Fna became an UNESCO Heritage Site in 1985, as one of the last places in the world where old oral narratives are still enacted.

The Souks Filling the alleys north of Djemaa el Fna is the souk, or traditional market – the largest one in Morocco. It

is, in turn, subdivided in some 18 souks, each one of them devoted to a specific trade or craftsmanship – from spices or ironwork, to the ingredients necessary for casting magic spells. The number of shops – often not much bigger in size than a closet - is overwhelming, and in them Moroccans can indulge in one of the activities that they enjoy most: bargaining. Cunning, patience, sense of humour, and strategy are needed for the game. Try your skills at it!

Dinner and Overnight in Marrakech

Inclusions

- 6 nights in your chosen accommodation
- Meal as specified in itinerary
(B = Breakfast, BR = Brunch, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- Activities and excursions according to itinerary

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Visit Casablanca, the economic capital Morocco and explore Hassan II Mosque, piece of art
- Discover Volubilis, the furthest point of the Roman empire into Africa
- Wander the medieval maze-like streets of Medieval Fes
- Watch acrobats and snake charmers entertain in Marrakech's Jemaa el-Fna Square

- Tours and excursions in mini buses/buses
or with public transportation according to itinerary with english speaking driver
- Local guides in the Cities
- Admission fees according to itinerary

Exclusions

- International flights
- Meals other than mentioned in itinerary
- Tours and Excursions other than mentioned in itinerary
- Early check-in and late check-out at hotels
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips for driver/guides
- Visa fees