

MOROCCO'S IMPERIAL CITIES, KASBAHS & SAHARAN BIVOAC

OBTIC04cz 7 DAYS/6 MAGICAL NIGHTS. CASABLANCA-RABAT/MARRAKECH/-OUARZAZATE-ZAGORA-ERG
LIHOUIDI/MARRAKECH/CASABLANCA

DAY 1: CASABLANCA - RABAT. You will be met on arrival Casablanca airport by your English-speaking National Guide after



11:45 to set out on a 1½ hours' drive to the administrative Imperial capital since 1912 of the Kingdom of Morocco, Rabat (R'bat al Fat'h) - one of the four Imperial Cities, founded in the 12th century (R'bat meaning fortified convent). Subject always to your flight's arrival time in Morocco, after checking-in at your hotel and freshening up, you may decide to take a light lunch before setting out on our sightseeing tour with a drive through this graceful city of parks and gardens along Victory Avenue to the Méchouar Precinct of the King's Palace. Regrettably, the Palace is not open to the public, but we can savour and photograph its impressive arches, redolent of the finest Islamic architecture. Next we arrive at the Chellah, once a prosperous Roman enclave called *Sala Colonia* in their Mauretania Tingitane Province, to be abandoned late in the 5th century, thence to fall into ruins to be transformed, late in the 14th century during the reign of the Merinides Sultanate, into a vast cemetery, their Necropolis, where we find also some Roman excavations. This Necropolis was destroyed by the earthquake of 1755 and is today a garden of date and banana palm trees, hibiscus, bougainvillea, olive and fig trees. Legend has it that Jews came to Sala Colonia five centuries before the Cartaginians, in the days of Solomon, to purchase gold. From here we continue to the Mohamed V Mausoleum, located on the southern side of the Great Mosque guarded by the mounted Royal Household Guard, the last resting places of the late King Mohammed V and of his son, the late King Hassan II. Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb at Les Invalides was the inspiration for the interior's modern Islamic design. It was the King Mohammed V who prevented the mass deportation of Moroccan Jews in the early years of World War II. We visit also the minaret of the Great Mosque, known also as the Hassan Tower. Begun in 1195, the tower was intended to be the largest minaret in the world along with the mosque, also intended to be the world's largest. In 1199 Sultan Yacoub el Mansour of the Almohad dynasty died, and construction on the mosque stopped. The tower only reached 44m (140ft), about half of its intended 86m (260ft) height. The rest of the mosque was also left incomplete, with only the foundations of several walls and 200 columns being constructed. Instead of having stairs, the tower is ascended by ramps which would have allowed the muezzin, who leads the call (*adhan*) to the faithful to the 5 daily prayers (*salat*) to ride a horse to the top of the tower to issue the call to prayer. The tower, according to tradition, was designed by an architect named Jabir who used a similar design plan for a sister tower, the Giralda in Seville, Spain. Both of the towers were modelled on the minaret of another one of Jabir's designs, the Koutoubia Mosque in Marrakech. We shall proceed to the 12th century Kasbah of the Oudayas in the ancient Medina at the heart of the military history of Rabat. This was the site of the original R'bat from which generations of cavalry have ridden out to subdue the rebellious Bou Raghhouala Berber tribes. It has also been a bastion against repeated attacks by those corsair raiders; the Kasbah's alleyways are reminiscent of a delightful whitewashed Andalusian village. We shall take a light lunch here as you enjoy the view overlooking the Bou Regreg river and the one-time lair of famed Moroccan corsairs of the Barbary Coast at the Salé Fortress; the corsairs who raided shipping from the time of the Crusades until early in the 19th century; the corsairs who captured Miguel de Cervantes; the corsairs mentioned in Doctor Dolittle - the Moroccan Sultan Moulay

Ismail actually made piracy a state monopoly in 1678. In 1783 the first American ship was captured and ransomed for \$60,000 cash; over the next 10 years a further dozen American ships were captured, the crew being made slaves in Algeria, one of the reasons why the United States Navy was born in 1794 with 6 frigates. From here we turn to our delightful accommodation for this night. LD.

DAY 2: RABAT - MARRAKECH. After breakfast we shall set off back towards the south east, for a 3 hour drive (with "comfort"



stops) skirting Casablanca to cross the fertile Chaouia Plains to the Imperial City of Marrakech. After check in we set out in a calèche (horse-drawn carriage) on a guided tour - a journey back into time and quite the best introduction to this Garden City on to the Majorelle Garden and Museum of Islamic Art of the recently-deceased fashion icon Yves Saint Laurent. Today, beautiful shaded grounds, an impressive collection of exotic plants and trees and an Islamic Art Museum (*Musée d'Art Islamique*) make this garden one of the must-see attractions in Marrakech. The gardens were once the home and haven of French painter Jacques Majorelle, born in 1886 to a renowned cabinet maker in Nancy, France. Travels to Spain, Egypt and the Mediterranean all pulled him away from his native country, but it was Morocco that beckoned Majorelle most strongly. In 1924 Majorelle settled in Marrakech on a property that would become known as Majorelle Garden where he created a retreat with a stunning home, spacious work studio, and vast garden in which he could indulge his botanical interest by growing plants and trees from around the world. Majorelle's passion for Morocco - especially the south - became evident in his paintings. Later travels to Sudan, Guinea, Niger, Senegal and the Ivory Coast were also to influence his work. Although Majorelle opened his property to visitors

in 1947, the garden began to deteriorate following his death in 1962. Restoration of the Majorelle Garden began after Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé purchased Majorelle's former home in 1980. The house itself is not open to the public. Partially hidden by the foliage of trees, its majestic architecture can be seen from certain vantage points in the garden. Further improvements were made in 2000, including an irrigation system which reduced water costs by 40 percent. Today, the grounds of the Garden are beautifully maintained and create an atmosphere of lush tranquillity. Winding walkways, quaint bridges, gurgling fountains, and shady gazebos add to the landscape. Home to hundreds of exotic plant and tree specimens brought from five continents, these include cactuses, bamboos, palms, blooming potted plants, and aquatic plants. Bird lovers will appreciate seeing the many species of local birds which inhabit the garden amongst which you may spot Pied Wagtails, Kestrels, Storks,

Collared Flycatchers and more. The green roofed building that gets most of the attention, however, is the bright cobalt blue (referred to as *bleu Majorelle*) and yellow building that Majorelle used as a studio workshop from 1931 now houses the Museum of Islamic Art. The same cobalt blue is used with bright yellow to add colour and contrast throughout the garden. This small museum houses a tasteful collection of Islamic art, good examples of Moroccan tribal art - some hundreds of years old - textiles, weapons, carpets from all over North Africa, jewellery, furniture. Some of Jacques Majorelle's art work and engravings of local scenes in Morocco is also on display. There are also exhibitions of marriage curtains and fabrics, embroideries, manuscripts and many other masterpieces. On now down into the Medina to the dramatic Almohad **Koutoubia Mosque** (entrance to the Mosque is prohibited to non-Muslims), one of the major architectural triumphs of the Almohades, the 12th century dynasty responsible



for one of the worst periods of Jewish persecution. The Koutoubia Mosque is the tallest mosque in Marrakech, its construction decided in 1158 by the Almohad Sultan Abdel Moumen soon after his conquest of Marrakech, occupying the square of a former Almohavid palace whose mosque was destroyed, supposedly as it did not face Mecca. Completed in 1199 with the construction of its famous minaret ordered by the Sultan's grandson, the Caliph Yacoub el-Mansour who died the same year, this minaret (from the Arabic word *menara* or lighthouse) was later used as model for Giralda of Seville then for the Hassan Tower of Rabat. The main function of the minaret was to provide a vantage point from which the muezzin can call out the *adhan*, calling the faithful to prayer. In most Mosques these

days, the *adhan* is called not from the minaret, but in the *musallah*, or Prayer Hall, via a microphone and speaker system, the role of the minaret is now largely for traditional and decorative purposes. A jewel of Hispano-Moresque art made up of 16 outlying naves and one larger central nave, its name is derived from the Arabic *al-Koutoubiyyin* for "bookseller", or "librarian", since it used to be surrounded by the stalls of sellers of manuscripts and books and by scribes. This square tower in finely-worked dressed stone is 77 metres tall, (as high as the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris) including its lantern. Considered to be the *ne plus ultra* structure of its kind, decorated with ceramic tiles forming different patterns on each side, it boasts of six rooms, one above the other, with a ramp leading up around them by way of which the muezzin could ride his horse (or mule) up to the balcony. It is built in a traditional Almohad style and the tower is adorned with four copper globes. According to legend, they were originally made of pure gold, and there were once supposed to have been only three. The fourth was donated by the wife of Yacoub el-Mansour. As compensation for her failure to keep the fast for one day during the month of Ramadan she had



her golden jewellery melted down to fashion the fourth globe. We continue into the **Djmaâ el Fnaâ Square** (the 'Assembly of the Dead'), where, until the 19th century, were traditionally displayed on stakes the severed heads of criminals. We take lunch at the Al Baraka Restaurant overlooking the Square to see from above stalls of goods, from fruit to alarm clocks; snake charmers and water sellers; fortune tellers and public scribes; tumblers and *nakkachat* - women with syringes full of henna - soothsayers and *gnaoua* musicians. With the touch of a journey back into time we set off into the bustling Kasbah to the lavishly-decorated **Saâdien Tombs** - discovered in 1917 with some tombs dating from the middle 1550s; this is the ancient cemetery of the *shorfa*, the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed. Here you see the Prayer Hall with its horseshoe arches, the tombs of the Alaouite princes from the 18th century and a large tomb of the Black Sultan, the Merinid Dynasty Abou Hassan. On into the Hall of Twelve Columns, the central mausoleum of Ahmed el Mansour, who died in 1603, with its colonnade of twelve decorated marble pillars and intensely carved upper stuccowork that looks like gilded lace. To his right is his son and successor Zaidan; to his left his grandson Mohammed ech-Cheik. There are 33 other tombs of Saâdien princelings. From here to the **El Badii Palace**. The remnants of a magnificent palace built by the Saâdien Sultan Ahmed Ibn Moussa al-Mansour in 1578(?) designed by Mohammed el-Heqqs under the influence of the Alhambra in Granada, which took some 16 years to complete, was named 'Badi' (the Incomparable), one of the 99 names of Allah (moreover, *ksar I-bdi* in Moroccan Arabic means 'the porcelain palace', which could refer to the rich ceramic panels that profusely decorated the building). Montaigne, in his *Voyage en Italie*, reported that Italian craftsmen near Pisa were cutting 'for the King of Fes in Barbary', 50 very tall Italian marble columns which were



paid for in sugar, weight for weight. Workmen from different countries, including in Europe, were recruited to execute the work. For three-quarters of a century, the Badi was the venue for all of the great ceremonies and parties given by the Saâdien Sultans and ended up with a reputation, more or less deserved, for excess and debauchery. This was the main reason why the Alaouite Sultan Moulay Ismail (1672-1727) ordered the complete destruction of the once fairy tale building and used the materials to decorate his own palace in Meknes. Consequently all that remains today is a section of the 2 metre-thick outer wall, the esplanade, with remains of its pools and orchards, one of the pavilions with its columns and some decorative elements (stucco, marble, zellige - small tiles). However, excavations carried out in the 20th century, the discovery of two drawings of the palace (one Portuguese and one English) and the reports of contemporary chroniclers and foreign visitors give us a reasonably precise idea of how the Badi would have been in its heyday. The palace, thought to have consisted of 360 rooms, was symmetrically planned around an enormous rectangular courtyard measuring 135 m by 110 m, including a long central pool measuring 90 m by 20 m that contained a monumental fountain and had hollows on either side planted with trees and flowers and four small rectangular basins at the ends whose ceramic mosaic paving is still visible. The east side of the palace looked out over a large garden known as 'the Crystal Garden'. Two pavilions measuring 15m by 16m were built halfway along the shorter sides of the courtyard and two more measuring 23m by 15m in the middle of the longer sides. Truncated-pyramid towers stood in the corners of the courtyard. The pavilions were crowned with domes whose ceilings were encrusted with gold from Sudan and precious *muqarnas* (honeycomb work) supported by marble columns with capitals covered with golden leaves. The floors and walls were covered with faience mosaics, the doors were made of sculpted cedar wood and, throughout, the fountains gushed water from the mouths of lions, leopards and pythons sculpted in solid silver. It also has a small,



underground, tunnel-like jail with about four cells where the king kept his prisoners. From here to the late 19th century **Bahia Palace** (its name translates as 'The Brilliant') built by craftsmen from Fes for the black slave Si' Ahmed Ben Musa (or Bou Ahmed) after he had risen to power and wealth as the Grand Vizier of Sultan Moulay al-Hassan. The attractive, well preserved, Harem Courtyard has featured in many Big Budget Movies. It took nearly 15 years to complete; the rooms (nearly 150!), housed Bou Ahmed, his 4 wives and 24 concubines plus servants and guards. The Palace follows the patterns of typical Islamic architecture, with central courtyards, having rooms leading off them, with



doorways that are placed so that you can't see beyond (providing privacy). Fountains and gardens are also typical features, along with the decorative stucco panels, tiled floors and zellige work. From here we continue up to the **Dar Si Said Museum**. Formally a palace originally built by Mehdi Mnebbi (1894-1908), Moroccan ambassador to London, it was then bought by T'hani el Glaoui, the Pasha of Marrakech and 'Lord of the Atlas' during the French Protectorate. Restored in 1997, it houses both traditional and contemporary exhibitions of Moroccan arts and sculpture - the very quintessence of Moroccan art. The building is the work of Si Said, a half-brother of grand vizier Bou Ahmed who expanded the Bahia Palace. In fact, Dar Si Said is a smaller version of that Palace, with finer and more impressive decoration. On the ground floor you can find clothes, objects in beaten copper, beautifully decorated weapons, skilfully crafted traditional silver Berber jewellery from the southern Anti Atlas region, oil lamps and carvings in the special Tarouddant soft stone.



Splendours from the past? Not at all, for many of the objects on display are still used and worn in mountain areas. Fountains sculpted from pink marble decorate the tiled courtyards that are accented by the turquoise, greens and whites of the mosaic designs. The most important exhibit in the Museum is a marble basin dating back to the 10th century, brought to Marrakech from Cordoba by the Almohad Sultan Ali Ben Youssef. The first floor salon impresses with its Hispano Moorish decoration and elegant furniture in cedar wood. It is such an accurate reproduction that, at any moment you half expect to see a bride in her ceremonial dress return to the armchair and show herself off to all the admiring guests. Other rooms are filled with an abundance of intricate chests, ancient pottery from Safi and Tamegroute, worked leather from Marrakech as well as a remarkable collection of Berber carpets from the High Atlas and others that originate from every corner of the globe; some have made use of leather while others make use of textiles to create items that accurately reflect the regions from which they originate. Stop a moment to examine coming from the Sahara region, characterised by the use of embroidered leather, and large, pile mats evoking the dry beauty of the semi-desert. A remarkably impressive eighteenth and nineteenth-century collection of door and window frames is to be found around the courtyard, all encrusted with the most delicate and refined ornamentation. We continue up into the Medina and the 14th century **Ali Ben Youssef Medersa** - one of the most beautiful buildings in Marrakech that housed the Islamic equivalent of a monastery; the tranquillity within contrasts with the chaotic pace of life outside in the Medina. Founded by the Merinid Sultan Abou el Hassan in the 14th century, it was almost completely rebuilt during the Saâdien Dynasty who made their distinctive mark in its architecture and art. The Medersa centres on a large courtyard with a central pool for ablutions. The buildings are made of carved cedar wood, exquisite stuccowork, and colourful zellige tiles. At the back is a sizable prayer hall where the most elaborate decoration can be found. The interior is covered in an abundance of pine cone and palm motifs used around the mihrab to create a three-dimensional appearance. Throughout the Medersa are many Arabic inscriptions in stucco and zellige tile, the most common of which is the *bismillah* invocation: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful." Above the central courtyard are the small windows of the tiny student dormitories; over 800 students were housed in this Medersa, difficult to imagine. From stairs in the entry vestibule you can explore all the rooms and enjoy a nice view over the courtyard. The rooms are arranged around smaller inner courtyards, rimmed with fine wood railings. We shall go on to see the Almoravid Dynasty Koubba; also called **Koubba Ba'Adiyn**, the oldest building in Marrakech and the only Almoravid building to remain standing in Morocco. The Almoravids (1062-1145) were reformers and monastic-type warriors from the desert nomadic Sanhaja Berber tribe in what is now Mauritania. After conquering their homeland, they expanded to Morocco in 1062 and eventually extended their empire all the way to Algiers. Probably an ablutions annexe for the Ben Youssef Mosque, for centuries it was covered over amid the many rebuildings of the mosque; it was only excavated in 1952. This little building is significant not only because it's very old, but because its style is at the root of all Moroccan architecture. Its motifs of pine cones, palms and acanthus leaves were used in the Ben Youssef Mosque and other later buildings; its beautifully-shaped windows became the distinctive design of the Almohades and Merinids. Also highly influential on later designs are the koubba's pyramid-like battlements, the rib design on the dome, and the sophisticated interior support system, composed of a square and star-shaped octagon. In addition to the koubba itself, visitors can view a large water cistern and remains of fountains for performing ablutions. We now proceed to the **Marrakech Museum of Contemporary Art** and the **Bert Flint Museum** in the **Maison Tiskiwin**. Displayed in a riad constructed at the turn of the twentieth century in Hispano-Mauresque style, Bert Flint, a Dutch anthropologist and art historian, displays his excellent collection of costumes, jewellery, arms, basketwork, musical instruments, Moroccan art, popular traditions and artefacts, carpets and furniture collected over a period of 50 years as he travelled along the Gold Road from the Atlas Mountains to Timbuktu, crossing the regions of the Sahara and the Souss Valley. Flint was born in Groningen in Holland in 1931 and after studying Islamic and Hispanic art and culture moved to Marrakech in 1957 where he taught art while continuing to study Andalusian-Arab culture. Over the years his focus had increasingly turned to rural culture shown here in all its glory and variety. We continue on through the labyrinth of narrow alleyways making up the renowned cool, colourful and aromatic Souqs of Marrakech - the Dyers' Souq being the last to be visited - finishing our guided visit in the Djmaâ el Fnaâ Square. Back at your hotel, you may either lounge around in the late afternoon or decide to venture further into the bustle of this cosmopolitan city until dinner late this evening. **BLD**.



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DAY 3: MARRAKECH.

Day at leisure accompanied by your guide and driver to take you where you will within the confines of this ochre coloured garden city. **B**. Later tonight you might like to go and chill out tonight at the Le Pacha night club (<http://www.pachamarrakech.com/pachaen.html>). Or you may opt for an excellent finale to any stay in Marrakech, the Chez Ali 'Fantasia' - truly a 1001 Nights' experience - http://www.ilove-marrakesh.com/chezali/index_en.html. Our journey this evening takes us out of the heat of the city on a road to palm groves, where twinkling lights beckon us out of the darkness to a magnificent spectacle. As evening progresses, various folklore groups pass through the nomad tents singing and dancing to their throbbing music. The highlight comes at the end of our meal when we are invited to witness charging robed horsemen in a display of their old tribal power as they shout and fire off their muskets and muzzle-loaders, bringing their horses to a sudden halt before us. Above us, in the night sky, Scheherazade and her Prince fly to the heavens on their magic carpet ride whilst fireworks light the sky as our evening of magical splendour comes to an end.



DAY 4: MARRAKECH - OUARZAZATE - ZAGORA - TAMEGROUTE - OULAD DRISS - ERG LIHOUDI. Departing from your hotel



in Marrakech at 06:45 at the latest we set off south in our 4WD over the Glaoua Plain to cross the High Atlas Mountains via the fabulous Tizi n'Tichka Pass - so hold on to your hats - to continue down alongside the Oued Ouarzazate to the ex-French Foreign Legion town of Ouarzazate; on now down through the magnificent Valley of the Oued Drâa until you arrive at the small charming kasbah-like Hotel Fibule Du Drâa in the oasis village of Zagora where you will have your midday lunch, to then set out - around 2 in the afternoon in winter, 3pm in the summer - for your lightning adventure towards the south-east deep into a sub-Saharan desert surrounding of many small dunes interspersed with the black gravelly 'Reg' stretches of the Jbel Tadrart basin. Driving further on down the eastern bank of the Oued Drâa for some 14km we pass by the ancient village of Tamegroute until, some 34 miles south of Zagora we arrive at the outskirts of the hamlet of Oulad Driss in the Hamada Du Drâa, close to the undefined border with Algeria, once a stop for the trans-Saharan caravans of salt, gold and slaves - and where the longest river in Morocco we have been following - the Oued Drâa - finally sinks into the desert. We now exchange our 4 wheels for the 4 legs of our ships of the desert for our "méharée" of some 3 hours up and over small dunes until we reach the dunes of Erg Lihouidi and our specially-erected nomad's camp, just in time for Mother Nature's tremendous show of Light and No Sound Sunset (no cloud cover permitting). These dunes are the closest one can get to the Sahara, as one imagines it, from Marrakech. The 'real' Sahara is to be found in the Merzouga region to the eastern border of Morocco with Algeria. After a welcoming traditional glass or two of mint tea, we shall have our dinner of vegetable tagine, or of chicken, or of couscous - which, doubtless, you'll try your hand at preparing - mint tea, bread and fruit. This night may be spent in our tents or out in the open air if you wish, under the awesome canopy of the starlit heavens around a blazing fire to witness the magnificent sunset from the crest of the dune, the rarefied heavens turning from bright blue to cobalt, to yellow to gold, to purple to black. The sands and stones change their colour too, in step with the lowering rays. A small group of Moroccan musicians and a dancer will doubtless invite you to join them to relax those muscles you found you didn't have during your dromedary ride. **BLD.**

DAY 5: ERG LIHOUDI - TAMEGROUTE - ZAGORA - AÏT BEN HADDOU - OUARZAZATE - MARRAKECH: Having witnessed an



awesome sunset the night before, now is the hour for an even more startling sunrise you can witness again from the top of the dune before our Bedouin breakfast of mint tea, bread, jams and cheeses, after which, your ships of the desert saddled up, you'll somewhat reluctantly strike off back towards the north-east and relative civilisation for your almost 2 hour long dromedary 'méharée' covering some 12 miles of Hamada in the direction of the distant Jbel Beni, to arrive around 10:00 - and now only 50 Days To Timbuktu - to rejoin our 4x4, some 11 miles north of M'Hamid which'll take us right at the trailing edge of the Jbel across the low dunes of Ait Isfoul and through an oasis via the ancient, remote once-Jewish Kasbahs of Beni Hayoun and Beni Sbih. Back now onto the asphalt road at

Tagounite and north on to an unusual tightly-knitted grouping still-inhabited underground kasbahs; this is the ancient village of Tamegroute, a seat of learning since the XIth century, with its Library of XIII century illuminated Koran scrolls written on gazelle hide, some works of Pythagoras and some original maps of Alexandria, together with some very early mathematics primers; a - voluntary - contribution to the upkeep of the Library is always appreciated. We continue our stroll through the alleyways of the Kasbah to an ancient Pottery Co-Operative, where pottery being still produced in the simplest of manners, in the simplest of kilns. If you have been to Fes, or have seen photographs of this Imperial City, here you'll see the famous green glaze associated with its tiled roofs - green, the colour of Islam representing Mother Earth - for the founders of the XVIIth century Abou Ben Naceur 'Naciri Brotherhood' in Tamegroute invited craftsmen and potters to this remote area with the intent of turning it into a thriving caravan hub city. Onwards now to the Fibule Du Drâa to arrive around 1pm, perhaps for a quick shower here before continuing on our way back up north to Ouarzazate along the Drâa Valley to stop at the ancient kasbah at Agdz for a light lunch and more en-route points of photo-opportunity. On the road from Ouarzazate to Marrakech we take you



to visit the remarkable UNESCO World Heritage Site of the magnificently exotic Ksour of Ait Ben Haddou. Here we alight from our vehicle to cross the oued to visit these various kasbahs, so closely-knit that they appear to be but one complete building, backed up against the looming mountain in a stretch of unforgiving Hamada. The thick, high, sheer, elaborately decorated pisé walls, stepped-up housing, turreted, crenulated ramparts, and balustrades and arched 'babs' are a sight not to be missed. One of the more spectacular sights in the Atlas ranges, set upon a rock above a reed-strewn assif, commanding the area for miles around, this kasbah, once home to employees of the Pacha El Glaoui - the "Lord of the Atlas", controlled the route to Marrakech until the French blasted a road

through the Tizi n'Tichka in the late 1920s. We shall break for a late lunch on the opposite bank of the oued (river) at the Restaurant of the Riad Dar Mouna to return up through the Tizi n'Tichka and over the Adrar n'Deren (High Atlas) range of mountains and the plains to arrive at our accommodation around 8 in the evening after your adventure into the deep south of the Kingdom of Morocco. **BLD.**

DAY 6: MARRAKECH-CASABLANCA. After breakfast, we shall set off around 9am back northwest to the commercial capital of Morocco - Casablanca - here to visit this bustling metropolis, starting at the elegant residential district of Anfa, the original site of Casablanca, with its green parks and Art Deco villas. Anfa hosted the Conference of Casablanca with President Roosevelt and Sir Winston Churchill, during which the date of the Allied landings on the French coasts was fixed for the spring of 1944 and where the somewhat difficult meeting with them and Generals Charles de Gaulle and Henri Giraud took place. Here, also, at Anfa, President Roosevelt received in secret the Sultan Mohammed V where the possible future of Morocco was discussed in depth. On now to the Corniche where a stop is made for a light lunch overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Once more back into our vehicle to visit the interior of the



amazingly-beautiful Hassan II Mosque, the second largest mosque in the Islamic world after the Masjid al-Hamra in Mecca. This architectural masterpiece, a symbol of an Islam open to the world, took 7 years to complete using 50 million man-hours and inaugurated on the 30th August, 1993 was built partially on the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, on the farthest western point of the Maghreb. Conceived by the French architect Michel Pinseau (1924-1999), the Mosque employed 3,300 craftsmen from all over Morocco; has 53,000 m² of carved cedar wood; 67,000 m² of plasterwork and some 10,000 m² of sculpted ornamentation and writings; it contains on the ground floor an oblong Prayer Hall of perfect symmetry measuring 200 x 100m. Supported by seventy-eight pillars where granite, marble and onyx mix their respective reflections, this vast room supports a retractable roof covered with emerald green tiles - the symbolic colour of Islam, representing Mother - to welcome to prayer 25,000 believers inside and 80,000 on the adjoining esplanade. Embedded in



the axis of the southern facade, a 210 metre-high minaret, boasts a laser beam of 30km reach pointing towards Mecca. This magnificent Mosque also encompasses a Medersa (School of Koranic learning), a Library, a National Museum and immense lecture halls, all beautifully decorated by artisans from all over Morocco: frescoes and zelliges in traditional geometrical motives, painted and sculptured woods, stuccos of intricate designs, arabesques in decorative drawings and writings in brilliant colour inaugurated in 1992 and a masterpiece of Moroccan architectural design and craftsmanship. From here down via the United Nations Square and the old Medina - at the beginning of the 20th century, there was but an empty space where the souk was held. It very quickly became the heart of the modern town; we continue on to the Central Market - a kaleidoscope of colour, charm and street musicians; of fresh fish, freshly-cut flowers, fruit, and spices, thence to visit of the exterior of the Dar el Makhzen, or King's Palace, with its magnificent doors and - time available - the New Medina - or Habous area - designed by French architects in the 1930s to resolve a housing crisis and create a modern, twentieth century Kasbah - here to stroll through the reasonably-modern (1923) souk and on past the Pasha's Mahakma Court of Islamic Law to your hotel. **BL.**



DAY 7: CASABLANCA-ONWARDS. After breakfast and in accordance with your flight schedule home (check-out from your hotel is at 12:00) you will be transferred to Casablanca's Mohammed V International airport in time for you flight home, taking with you some certainly incredible memories of our land so full of remarkable contrasts and very friendly people. **B.**

(FOR COUPLES OR SMALL FAMILIES, WE RECOMMEND CERTAIN RIADS BE CONSIDERED FOR MORE ATMOSPHERE AND PRIVACY)

To choose you hotel or ryad, please close this page and go to [Find a Hotel](#) or [Find a Ryad](#).

N.B. THIS PROGRAMME DOES NOT OPERATE AS SUCH OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR, GIVEN THERE IS AN OBLIGATORY REQUIREMENT OF FIVE TO SIX CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS' STAY IN MOST HOTELS IN FES AND MARRAKECH COVERING THE PERIOD 24 DECEMBER TO 05 JANUARY.

OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE: Accommodation at specified hotels/riads or similar as required and as *available at time of reservation* - including relevant taxes. Meals as detailed or modified in accordance with your instructions. Porterage on 1 piece of luggage per person in/out airports & hotels/riads. Private transportation in an air-conditioned vehicle from Casablanca to Casablanca. Sightseeing tours, including one by calèche in Marrakech, all related entrance fees as listed in the itinerary plus a dromedary ride to overnight in a Berber nomad bivouac in Morocco's sub-Sahara. An English-speaking Licensed National Guide throughout. Bottled water en-route. Medical and Accident Insurance.

OUR PRICES WILL NOT INCLUDE: Gratuities to guide, drivers, waiters and camp headman Any expenditure of a personal nature, nor anything not specifically mentioned in the itinerary.

IT IS RECOMMENDED YOU BRING WITH YOU: Good trainers; pullover; day pack; hygienic 'wipes'; camera and Ziploc bags for sensitive lenses; sunglasses, sunscreen, swimming costume (seasonal). **For the desert safari:-** day pack; windcheater (seasonal), broad-brimmed hat (or you may purchase a 'Chèche' before you set out from Zagora); change of walking socks; personal toiletries; hygienic 'Wipes'; small First Aid kit; torch with batteries (non-essential); filled water bottle; water purification drops - usually iodine; sunscreen, sunglasses; nibbles and/or dried fruit. Drinking chocolate if preferred. Camera, film and plastic bags for lenses; for those who wear contact lenses, it could be a good idea to bring along a spare pair of glasses.