

THE MARVELS OF MOROCCO - ANCIENT & MODERN

OBTIC16cc 12DAYS/11 MAGICAL NIGHTS. CASABLANCA/MARRAKECH - ESSAOUIRA - MARRAKECH - OURIKA VALLEY - MARRAKECH/RABAT/TANGIER/TETOUAN-TANGIER/CHECHAOUEN-FES/VOLUBILIS-MEKNES-FES/CASABLANCA.

DAY 1: CASABLANCA: You will be met on arrival at Casablanca's airport after your long flight and transferred to your hotel in the city centre. After check-in, we shall visit the interior of the nearby amazingly-beautiful Hassan II Mosque, the second largest mosque in the Islamic world after the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. We should visit this marvel today in the event your return to Casablanca is on a Friday which would preclude a visit then as it is closed to non-believers on a Friday. 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. The last part of our tour takes us to the busy United Nations Square. Under the walls of 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 may make a stop here for shopping, should you so wish, before returning to your hotel. Perhaps you might like later have a drink at the American-owned Rick's Café, (www.rickscafe.ma) complete with mahogany, wicker and ceiling fans - all without 'Rick Blaine' Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Peter Lorre and Claude Rains.



DAY 2: CASABLANCA-MARRAKECH. After breakfast we shall set off for a 3 hour drive across the plains to the Imperial City of Marrakech where, upon arrival, we shall check into your hotel or riad, thence to make for the Majorelle Garden and Museum of Islamic Art of the deceased fashion icon Yves Saint Laurent by calèche (horse-drawn carriage). 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-Koutoubiyin* 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 on foot 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 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 Saïd Museum**. Formally a



palace originally built by Mehdi Mnebbi (1894-1908), Moroccan ambassador to London, it was then bought by T'hami el Glaoui, the famous 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 Saïd, a half-brother of grand vizier Bou Ahmed who expanded the Bahia Palace. In fact, Dar Si Saïd 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 housed in a 19th century palace, restored and reopened as a museum in 1997. Items on display include archaeological artefacts, ceramics, jewellery, traditional weapons, garments and uniforms, historic documents and calligraphy, as well as contemporary art exhibitions set within beautiful gardens, lake-sized pools and calm and quiet surroundings. We continue on through the

Escheresque 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 and so back to your hotel or riad. **BL.**

DAY 3: MARRAKECH - ESSAOUIRA - MARRAKECH: After breakfast we set out at around 9 for a 2 hours' drive west to the Atlantic coast and the ancient Phoenician town of Mogador - a corruption of the Berber word *Amegdul*, meaning 'well-protected' - and now, since Independence, called Essaouira - 'Little Picture.' Abandoned by the Portuguese in 1541, it was not until 1765 that the Alaouite Sultan Sidi Mohammad Ibn Abdullah transformed Mogador into a fortified city. The ramparts were never that effective in keeping out the marauding tribesmen but now, a charming artists' town with its old port and cannons overlooking the fishing fleet, Essaouira invites you to wander through the narrow alleyways which make up the Medina to witness artisans at work making their wooden tables, boxes and sundry items in lemon or briar wood inlaid with mother of pearl - the purple dyes produced by the crushed shellfish were exported from the offshore Purple Islands by the conquering Romans to colour the togas of the rich back home. We shall check in to our and then leave for a walk around this enchanting city to enjoy a lunch (not included) of Essaouira's famed seafood, either on the quayside or in one of the several quaint cafés that decorate this charming historical town. Through now to the Mellah (old Jewish Quarter), thence, perhaps, a camel ride along the beach? A visit to Jimi Hedrix's "Castles of Sand"? Perfect your tan on the beach? Try board, wind or kite surfing, for which this town and its waves are renowned? You'll be pleasantly surprised to find what this artist-colony town has to offer. Late this evening we shall return to your hotel or riad in Marrakech. **B.**



DAY 4: MARRAKECH - OURIKA VALLEY - MARRAKECH. After breakfast, we shall make a 90 minute excursion south to the beautiful Ourika Valley in those High Atlas Mountains you can see from your hotel or riad, whose stream meanders through orchards, ancient terraced fields, gardens and small pisé (adobe) villages clawed from the mountain sides by the independent Berber tribesmen. We shall continue on up to the last trailhead village in the valley - Setti Fadma. On returning to Marrakech, we shall stop halfway back down the valley at the hamlet of Aghbalou to take lunch at the Restaurant Ramuntcho overlooking the oued (river) with the remainder of afternoon at leisure. Your driver and guide will be at your disposition. **BL.**



DAY 5: MARRAKECH - RABAT: After breakfast we shall leave for a 3 hour's 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). Sightseeing here will start 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 Lisbon 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 Carthaginians, in the days of Solomon, to purchase gold. On now to the **Archaeological Museum**. Built in 1932 and enlarged a few years later to display the finds resulting from intense archaeological research, this museum has housed the National Museum collections since 1986. It is one of the most sumptuous in Morocco and should certainly not be missed. The prehistoric section brings together human remains from the middle Palaeolithic period (probably Neanderthals) to the Neolithic (4000 B.C.), proving the continuity and size of the population at this time. The Islamic archaeology section is constantly growing with finds coming from the excavations of 8th and 9th century sites, enabling us to have a clear idea of their potters, herdsman, surgeons and bakers



who have left us the legacy of their tools, while their womenfolk have left us their jewellery and the animals their harnesses. There is a collection of superb bronzes recovered from the excavations at Volubilis, the Romano-Berber capital of Mauritania Tingitana. When Rome ordered the evacuation of Volubilis in the third century, the citizens, expecting to return shortly, buried their works of art outside the city, where they were to remain undisturbed for 17 centuries. These pieces are kept apart in the Salle des Bronzes. Pre-Roman and Roman civilisations are particularly well-represented by some of the finest pieces to have survived from those periods. there is a first-rate collection of Hellenistic-style bronzes, so exceptional that it is difficult to know where to look first: the "Drunken Donkey", passionately lyrical, an incomparable masterpiece from the time of the Emperor Augustus; the "Volubilis Guard-



Dog" (centrepiece of a fountain) with its stunning realism, the "Young man Crowned With Ivy", a marvel of elegance and grace; the Rider and the busts presumed to be those of Cato the Younger and the young King Juba II of Mauritania Tingitana - the "Heads of Young Berbers" in marble, remarkable for their technical perfection and the vigorous strength of their expression. 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 modeled on the minaret of another one of Jabir's designs, the Koutoubia Mosque in Marrakech. From here we shall proceed into the ancient Medina at the heart of the military history of Rabat - historical sources attest to a continued presence here of a Jewish community since 1492 after their expulsion by the Catholic Kings and the subsequent Inquisition - located in the Al Buhaira Quarter until the establishment of the Mellah in 1807. Here we enter the **Kasbah of the Oudayas and Museum** whose alleyways are reminiscent of a delightful blue and whitewashed Andalusian village (blue being the colour of Judaism). 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 corsair raiders. The museum is situated in the opulent lodge built by Sultan



Moulay Ismail in the 17th century as his Rabat residence. This spectacular lodge is known for its breathtaking garden, the first of its masterpieces, that is a maze of pathways, surrounded by lush vegetation, endless beds of vibrant flowers which soften the strict geometry of those paths, together with beautiful ramparts and fountains making it amongst the very finest of all Andalusian gardens.

Over and above the immaculate gardens that attract many visitors each year, the museum building itself is an awesome sight. Its spacious rooms and ancient interior, which is decorated in true Moroccan fashion, instill an atmosphere of royalty, wealth and absolute luxury. From marble halls, priceless carpets, works of art and unmistakable elegance, the Oudayas Museum is a gateway into the past and the rich hypnotic history of Morocco. At the far end is a room reproducing an ancient Moroccan interior with a vast bay opening onto this glorious spectacle with its magnificent use of colours finished off with beautiful cushions in brocade, silk and gold cover the divans all around the room. A little further on, in a cool marble

room, stand rows of very old illuminated Korans, jewellery, pottery and musical instruments. The carpets exhibited here are not just woven masterpieces, but extraordinary feats of meticulous stitching and detailed work. A true Rabat carpet can have more



than 150 thousand stitches to just one square metre. The motifs and patterns found on these carpets are traditional and often refer to the specific craftsman; styles and techniques used to produce these rare carpets being unique to Morocco. Using a less elaborate technique, the rural carpets, called Berbers, demonstrate a powerful sense of composition, colour and ornamentation which is an art of its own with a unique appeal. You may also view the market place, furniture displays, diamond cutting exhibitions, statues, sculptures, textiles, fabrics, metalworking (with both silver and gold) exhibits, decorative arts and displays of costumes. We break for a light lunch in the Restaurant Borj Eddar overlooking the estuary of the Bou Regreg river, its bay being 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 Doolittle - 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.

BLD.



DAY 6: RABAT - SALE - LARACHE - LIXUS - ASILAH - TANGIER: We set out today for a 4 hours' drive towards the north via Salé, sister city of Rabat, its Mellah, an important centre of Jewish intellectual thought, was established the same year as in Rabat.



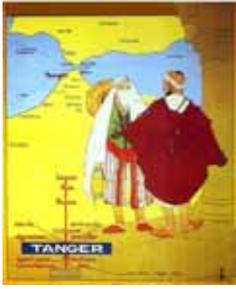
The main door to the Mellah and the beautiful Medersa were constructed by the Merinids, who had close ties to the Jews. Sale's most famous Rabbi, Raphael Ben Mordechai Encaoua (1848-1935) the chief Rabbi of Morocco, is buried in the Salé cemetery. We continue to skirt the town of Kenitra and on to the town of Larache (El Araich). Larache is an important, laid-back harbour town founded in the 7th century when a group of Muslim soldiers from the Arabian Peninsula extended their camp at Lixus onto the south bank of the Oued (River) Loukos. In 1471, Portuguese settlers from Asilah and Tangier drove the inhabitants out of Larache, which was to remain uninhabited until the Sultan of Fes, *Mohamed es Said ech Sheik*,

decided to build a stronghold on the plateau above river. He constructed a fortress at the entrance to the port so as to control access. For a long time, attempts by the Portuguese, Spanish and French to retake it met with no success. The Kasbah, built in 1491 by Moulay en Nasser, became a pirate stronghold and it was here that the corsair ships raiding out of Rabat and Salé were built. From 1610 until 1689, the town passed to Spanish hands, who used it mainly as a trading stop, never really administering the town. The somewhat despotic ruler Moulay Ismail Ibn Sharif (1645?-1727), known in Morocco as the "Warrior King", second ruler of the Alaouite Dynasty (all of whom claim to be a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed through his grandson Hassan Ibn Ali), finally retook it in 1689. Attacks on Larache continued but it still remained in Muslim hands. Spain took it again in 1911 and held it until Morocco's independence in 1956. These separate periods of Arab and Spanish rule have left their mark; although the layout of the old town is typically Arab, houses in the newer town appear Andalusian in style, given the influence of the Moorish refugees from the Spanish inquisition. We shall make a brief stop at the ruins of Lixus, set on a Tchemmich hillside which dominates the plain 80m above the marshes through which the Loukos flows and some 3 km inland from the Atlantic Ocean at the entrance of the river, bounded to the north and east by forests of cork oak. An ancient city of Mauretania Tingitana, in the 7th century BC it was settled by the Phoenicians to become part of the Carthaginian Empire. When Carthage fell to Ancient Rome it then became a Roman Imperial outpost, attaining its zenith during the reign of the emperor Claudius (41-54AD). Some of the Greek Ancients located here the mythological garden of the Hesperidia, keepers of Hercules' mythical Golden Apples. The site was excavated continuously from 1948 to 1969, an exhaustive work having been undertaken to study the site's rich mosaics, one of which is of sixty meters representing Poseidon. The excavated zones constitute approximately 20% of the total surface of the site.



We continue northwards to Asilah, a picturesque Andalusian-like small fishing village whose history stretches back nearly 3,500 years. The reason for this is that Asilah, already known for its beaches, is also a natural harbour that has been used by many invaders throughout the centuries including the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Byzantines, Romans, Arabs, Normans, and Portuguese. The Portuguese built the large walls, ramparts, and fortifications that give the town its distinctive appearance to this day. Its fortunes declined when John III, the fifteenth King of Portugal and the Algarve, the "Grocer King" decided to abandon it in 1549. In 1692, Moulay Ismail Ibn Sharif took back the town, again serving as an authorised major haven for corsairs during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This picturesque "Bohemian" Andalusian-style town, after centuries of virtual anonymity, thrives once more - this time as an oasis of culture. As with Larache, Asilah was part of Spanish Morocco from 1912 until independence in 1956. Asilah is a very interesting blend of laid back and busy port, of culture and tourism and everything in between. It's story is

of a town of once great importance in Morocco and fame that then wasted away with the inevitable changes of time, but in the past several decades has worked to make itself one of the centres of culture in the entire Muslim world - and thus bring the town back into modern relevance. It is a far quieter place now, with pirates and wars long forgotten, though the city walls and ramparts remain in beautiful shape because of restoration work. Today it is a popular tourist destination, in part because of the aptly named Paradise Beach, a relaxing pace of life and a series of cultural festivals that have made Asilah one of the great cultural centres of the Muslim world. After stopping for a light lunch of sea food, we make a short dash up to the throbbing city of Tangier.



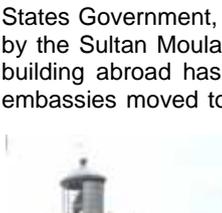
The modern Tanjah (Anglicised to Tangier) was first known as a Phoenician trading port in the 15th century B.C, and later a Carthaginian settlement. Or perhaps founded by the Numidians, the then native population, ancestors of the Berbers. Its name is possibly derived from the Berber goddess Tinjis (or Tinga). Ancient coins call it Tenga, Tinga, and Titga, Greek and Latin authors giving numerous variations of the name. According to Berber mythology, the town was built by Sufax, son of Tinjis, wife of the Berber hero Antois. The Greeks ascribed its foundation to the giant Antaeus, son of the Greek god Poseidon whose tomb and skeleton were pointed out in the vicinity, calling Sufax the son of Herakles (Hercules) by the widow of Antaeus. The cave of Hercules, a few miles from the city, is a major tourist attraction. It is believed that Hercules slept there before attempting one of his fabled 12 Labours: Tangier; gateway to Africa. Tanjah to the Moroccan; Tanger to the French; Tangiers to the English. Tangier, the 'Bride of the North'.

According to Greek legend, it was Hercules (Herakles), that impetuous demi-god, who created the Straits named Gibraltar, who separated the European and African continents with a blow of his sword (or shoulder!) and raised the famous columns, The Pillars of Hercules (the hills on the two sides of the Mediterranean Sea, Jbel Tariq - "Gibraltar" and Jbel Musa in Morocco). It is said that he left a large hole in the caves that bear his name on the Spartel promontory at the end of the bay to the west of Tangiers to observe the sea and admire his work. If the legend is true, the Moroccans, North Africans or Africans in general would have great reason to be angry with Hercules, for his thoughtlessness and all the gods of ancient Greece, for what a strange idea it was to separate the land and to create these geographic fictions that are continents! Had Hercules contained himself just a little bit, history would have followed another course; the many candidates for clandestine immigration who risk their lives to cross the Straits each day, would only have had to climb a wall or cut the barbed wire fence to cross to the other side, as they do between Mexico and the United States. Fortunately, Hercules was not too efficient in his work: the two continents are not far from each other. At the closest point, the straits are only 14 kilometres apart. It is for this reason that men sometimes think to repair the mistake the hero made by creating a fixed link between Spain and Morocco. It was the capital of the Roman province of Mauretania Tingitana under the Emperor Marcus Salvius Otho, later to be occupied by Vandals, Byzantines, Visigoths and Arabs. Captured by the Portuguese in 1471, it was then to pass to England in 1662, as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza on her marriage to King Charles II. In 1679, the Moroccan Sultan Moulay Ismail made an unsuccessful attempt to seize the town but imposed a crippling blockade which ultimately forced the English to withdraw. The English destroyed the town and its port facilities prior to their departure in 1684. Under Moulay Ismail the city was reconstructed to some extent, to later become a lair of Barbary Coast pirates but it gradually declined until, by 1810, the population was no more than 5,000.

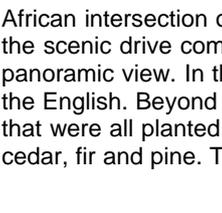


Tangier, a place where the street signs are in three languages; in fact, no less than 12 nations have occupied the city at one time or another since the 5th century. Tangier, of the wealthy Berber brigand chieftain Sherif Moulay Ahmed er-Raisouli, appointed Governor by the Sultan in the early 1900s; he who kidnapped real-life American victims Ion Perdicaris and his step-son Cromwell Varley (and who was played by Sean Connery in the 1975 film "The Wind and the Lion"). From 1923 Tangier and a small surrounding enclave became an international zone, administered by Spain between 1940-45. In 1956 it was transferred to independent Morocco to become a free port in 1962. With a history of intrigue and mystery, Tangier is the country's most cosmopolitan city; – a city that has everything you'd expect from Morocco. On arrival here we check in to our hotel, later to leave for a tour of Tangier. It has no formal Mellah, but has instead an unprotected Jewish quarter dating from the second half of the 19th century where many synagogues were

once concentrated in one narrow, winding street, "Synagogues Street," recently renamed "Synagogue Street" because only one now remains open. We enter the medieval Medina, a vast, picturesque, vibrant souk - the 'Grand Socco' (Spanish for 'souk'); tea houses; the Mendoubia Gardens with their eight-hundred-year-old trees; the Sidi Bounabid Mosque, its minaret decorated with multi-hued faïences dominating the Medina, the Kasbah Square with its portico of white marble columns and the great Méchouar where the pashas once granted audiences; the Moulay Ismail Mosque; the Tangier American Legation Museum and the Merinid College. The Tangier American Legation Museum, the first property acquired abroad by the United States Government, is a thriving cultural centre, museum, conference centre and library in the heart of the old walled Medina, housed in the only historic landmark of the United States located abroad and saved from destruction by a small but dedicated group of American citizens who established a public, non-profit organization. The first property acquired abroad by the United



States Government, this complex structure contains the two-story mud and stone building presented to the United States in 1821 by the Sultan Moulay Suliman and until 1956, the U.S. diplomatic mission to Morocco was located here, the longest period any building abroad has been occupied as a United States diplomatic post. With the end of the French Protectorate in 1956, all embassies moved to the capital, Rabat, but the American Legation continued as a Consulate for another five years until a new consulate was built outside the old Medina. Thereafter, the American Legation building served as an Arabic language school for American diplomats and a Peace Corps training centre. In 1976 the Old American Legation stood empty and in a sad state of disrepair. Concerned about its fate, the group obtained a lease from the Department of State to rent the Legation building. Since the American Bicentennial celebration in 1976 the Legation has been operating a museum and cultural centre and is symbolic of the 1786 Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship, which is still in force today. The complex expanded over the years as the surrounding houses were bought up. During World War II it served as headquarters for United States intelligence agents. Leaving Tangier to set out towards the west on a zigzag road passing through the wealthy residential district of the Marché aux Boeufs and along the new mountain road edged with elegant, sumptuous villas, ornate gates and beautiful gardens, the Governor's Residence and the King's Summer Palace, we follow the mountain road towards the seaward extremity of Jbel el Kbir at Cape Spartel, set on the Atlantic Coast, considered by political convention to be the most north-western point of Africa, the



African intersection of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Just before reaching the striking, square-shaped lighthouse the scenic drive comes upon long golden ocean beaches and the blue Atlantic Ocean. Here we shall stop briefly to marvel at the panoramic view. In the 17th century, this wooded hill area provided cover for the Moors in their battles against the Portuguese and the English. Beyond this area you continue along through, forested hills covered with a uniquely Mediterranean variety of pine tree that were all planted by volunteers. In these westernmost hills of Morocco there are large forested areas of oak, juniper, cork-oak, cedar, fir and pine. The lighthouse, 312 ft. above sea level, built in 1864 at the cost of the Sultan of Morocco and maintained at the

joint expense of England, France, Italy and Spain, is the only one on the western coast. It is provided with a large fixed intermittent white light for the safety of passing ships. We carry on to enjoy a visit of the Caves of the Oracle of Herakles, where legend has it he breathed his last breath after separating Europe from Africa, having completed his 12 Labours. The mouths of these caves, partly man-made and partly natural, open up onto the Atlantic Ocean to be flooded at high tide when water gushes up through these massive holes in the ground and cliffside; it's very impressive. No-one is exactly sure how the caves were created; some say that for some reason an ancient civilization used to carve millstones out of the solid rock that caused giant caves to form over the



years. How these Neolithic people managed to cut into solid rock with simple and crude tools is still a mystery. At low tide, the views from inside the caves looking out over the ocean are stunning, the colours in particular; the blue Atlantic Ocean and sky above may seem to resemble an upside-down silhouette of Africa. Some people would have it the caves were once joined under the sea to St Michael's Caves on the Rock of Gibraltar and that this is "possibly" how the Barbary Apes crossed over. But nobody knows for sure. This coastline is also where the Barbary pirates (corsairs) of the region were once headquartered. Unfortunately, the nearby old 2nd and 3rd century Roman ruins of Cotta just 500 feet away, are now closed to the public. We return to our hotel, perchance to explore further this fascinating city on foot, strolling through the mysterious winding alleyways and souks of the Medina, stopping to barter for that "essential" souvenir and to admire the beautiful handicrafts. **BLD.**

DAY 7: TANGIER - TETOUAN - TANGIER: After breakfast, we leave for 'The White Dove of Culture', setting out some 60 km to



the south-east across fertile plains and through a narrow pass to Tetouan - in the Tamazight language of the Berber "*Tittouan*", meaning "Springs" - situated on a rocky plateau detached from the southern flank of the Jbel Dersa overlooking the fertile Martil Valley and to the north of the er-Rif Mountains, set in the middle of a belt of orchards that contain orange, almond, pomegranate and cypress trees. Behind it rise rugged masses of rock, the southern wall of Fahs Anjera countryside, once practically closed to Europeans; across the valley are hills which form the northern limit of the once-impenetrable er-Rif Mountains. Founded in the 3rd century BC, (artefacts from both the Roman and the Phoenician era have been found in the nearby site of Tamuda, a major town in the Roman Province of Mauretania Tingitana which was finally laid waste in 40 A.D when the Romans put down a revolt by a freedman of Ptolemy -

Aedemon) - around 1305 the town was rebuilt by the Merinid king Abu Thabit to serve as a base for attacks on Ceuta. Around 1399 it was destroyed by the Castilians of King Henry III as Barbary pirates were using it as a base for their attacks on his shipping. By the end of the 15th century it had been rebuilt by refugees from the Reconquista (reconquest of Spain from the Moorish Empire, completed by the fall of Granada in 1492), when those Andalusian Moors first erected thick walls to fill the enclosure with small houses. It was to be captured on 4th February 1860 by Spaniards under Leopoldo O'Donnell (a descendant of an old Irish royal family, O'Donnell of Tyrconnell, who was made hereditary Duke of Tetouan, later to become Prime Minister of Spain). In 1913 it became the capital of the part of Morocco under the Spanish Protectorate to be governed by the Caliph - a Moroccan prince, serving as Viceroy for the Sultan - and it remained its capital until 1956 when it became part of the independent state of Morocco. Many people in the city still speak Spanish and you'll notice road signs often bear names written both in Spanish and in Arabic, though others are in Arabic and French, the second language of Morocco.

Like Rabat, Fes and Salé, Tetouan is a "hedrya" town; that is, a centre of culture and refinement. The town contains many monuments: a fort, well-preserved walls; any number of mosques, fountains, fondouks (caravanserais or taverns) and, last but not least, the Khalifa's old palace which used to be the residence of his Majesty's representative at the time of the Protectorate, a palace built in the 17th century to be renovated and restored in 1948 retaining its ideal example of Hispano-Mauresque architecture. With streets fairly wide and straight, many of the houses of aristocratic Arabs - descendants of those expelled from the Moorish Spain during the Spanish Inquisition - possess marble fountains and small groves planted with orange trees. Within the houses the ceilings are often exquisitely carved and painted in Hispano-Mauresque designs, such as are found in the Alhambra of Granada; the tile-work (zellige) for which Tetouan is also known may be seen on floors, pillars and dados. Traditional industries include this tile work, inlaid with silver wire. Home once also to an important Sephardic Jewish community who once lived here in their Mellah, or Jewish Quarter, separated from the rest of the town by gates which were closed at night.



These delightful streets wind among bluish white walls to open on to small squares, centres of intense activity. Each street is occupied by a trade guild; the street of dyers adjoins that of gunsmiths offering much-appreciated flintlocks, not far from weavers of artistic cloths used as capes and skirts by women of the rural areas and jewellers. Manufacturers of the thick-soled yellow slippers (babouches) and leather workers are close to the tanneries and other craft workshops. Early in the morning country women arrive to sell their wares, wrapped in their candy-striped clothes, wearing gaiters laced to the knee and wide-brimmed straw hats decorated with pompoms, to offer butter, honey, vegetables and herbs to a lively, hurrying clientele. We shall visit Hassan II Square, situated at the point where the old and modern parts of the town converge to constitute the heart of the town. Reminiscent of Andalusia with its kiosks, fountains and flower boxes, the square remains an ideal meeting point for afternoon strollers from the time of the Spanish Protectorate; buildings with wrought iron balconies and shop windows filled with imported commodities to fascinate the passers-by. On to the very characteristic and traditional walled Medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, here to find in the souk many white, low houses with weavers, jewellers

and leather workers carrying out their artistry. We shall visit the Museum of Moroccan Art (closed, unfortunately, on Tuesdays) and the Handicrafts School. Light refreshments are taken in a café near the Bab el Oukla before continuing our tour of the city, thence to return to our hotel in Tangier. **BL.**

DAY 8: TANGIER - CHEFCHAOUEN - FES: After breakfast we now continue south to Chaouen. Chaouen, Xaouen or Chefchaouen? You may take your pick.



Chefchaouen is situated at 600m in the er-Rif Mountains. Founded in 1415 by Cherif Sidi Ali Ben Rachid and Moorish exiles from Spain, it was to remain unfinished as he was assassinated by the Portuguese. His cousin, Abou Al-Hassan Ali Ibn Rachid was to re-site this citadel town in 1480 to the right bank of the Oued Fouarat, enclosing it with ramparts with 7 Babs, or gates, 5 Quarters - the El Kharrazine, the Rif El Andalous, the Rif El Sabannine, the Houamat El Ansar and the Houamat El Souk. Chefchaouen's appearance will immediately jump out at you. Houses are generally simple, but decorated with bright white, turquoise, teal and powder-blue walls, made by mixing lime and water with paint, and doors of bright or cobalt blue, a tradition stemming from the town's former Jewish population wishing to preserve their Andalusian heritage, the blue of Judaism said to ward off evil spirits. The streets are remarkably clean by any world city's standards and if these deep blue doors set against brilliant white houses on immaculate streets aren't enough for you, then there is the skyline, for this Berber village mountain retreat nestles snugly between two mountain tops of the Jbel Kelaâ Ou Tissarka (2122m) known as Ech-Chaoua - "the horns", climbing up the valley to end at the water source which provides some of the freshest water in the country. Chefchaouen can thus be translated to mean "look at the horns" - the horns of a goat.

Despite how close Chefchaouen is to the European continent, only three Christians ever found their way here; the first in 1883, spent 1 dangerous hour here dressed as a Rabbi; the second, a British journalist escaped with his life and the third, in 1892, didn't. This region was once one of the most hostile towards Europeans, which is understandable given the town was originally founded by those Moorish Jews and Muslims forcibly displaced from Spain during the Inquisition. This hostility continued when Morocco was fighting the Spanish to avoid becoming a colony. The local chief fought the Spanish, to be captured only with help from French troops. The ferocious inter-tribal battles between Riffian factions led to a man being considered a coward were he to reach old age. None of this hostility remains, however, though the fierce pride of these citizens can still be seen in that they are very slow to take up Western habits, in large part because of this history. For instance, up until 1937, slaves were still being openly sold in the slave souq.



Chefchaouen is a popular shopping destination for many serious tourists, as the town offers some native handicrafts that simply can not be found in most other places in Morocco. Our guided walking tour of this delightful blue and white village takes in the Palace El Makhzen and the famous (3000m²) square of Ouatta el Hammam; the maze of alleyways with the fine doorways in the Medina; the crumbling ochre and toffee-coloured kasbah; the exterior of the El Masjid El Andalous with its octagonal mosque, so characteristic of Northern Morocco. On our leisurely stroll throughout the Medina the first thing that may catch your eyes is a man selling pigment in shades of blue, yellow, pink and orange. The pigment is the same that is used on the walls of the city. You will see cobblers hand making the white and yellow fine leather pointed slippers ('babouches') worn by the local inhabitants; a Berber weaver at his loom producing a local style of red and white blanket; artisans offering many beautiful djellabas sewn with finely embroidered seams and carpenters carving tables and chairs made of fragrant cedar wood displaying delicate Islamic designs. There are beautifully ordained mirrors with hand-painted flowers and a wide

variety of woven blankets and wool garments; of native goat cheeses to olives and olive oil and honey, the same honey General Franco had regularly airshipped to him. We continue through the town of Ouezzane, once controlled by an important Muslim fraternity who encouraged Jewish traders and agriculturists to live near-by and on to our accommodation in the medieval Imperial City of Fes. Fes, the city that was once, after Mecca and Medina, held as one of the holiest cities of the Islamic world; the city whose merchants were travelling to China in the 15th century; the city that, least in importance, gave its name to the red cylindrical, brimless hat used over most of the Moslem world. Moroccans say that Marrakech, Rabat and Casablanca live in the present, but that Fes definitely lives in the past. It should come as no surprise. European chroniclers of the Middle Ages wrote with awe of the city that for several centuries was the most civilized Western outpost of the Semitic world. Its scholars introduced astronomy and medicine to the West via Spain when it was under Moorish rule. Historians of the time said that Plato and Aristotle first reached Western Europe in Arabic translations - from Fes. Welcome to a different world. With its two hundred mosques and holy shrines, Fes contains more places of worship than any other Moroccan city. At its peak, early in the 13th century, Fes el-Bali alone boasted almost eight hundred mosques and mausoleums for its 125,000 inhabitants. **BLD.**

DAY 9: FES: In 786, one hundred and fifty years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed Bin Abdullah Banu Hashim, his grandson was to set foot in Morocco. This man was Idriss Ibn Abdallah, destined to become Moulay Idriss, patron saint of Morocco and founder of Fes. Implicated in a failed rebellion against the Arabian Abbasids, he fled Baghdad to come with his bedraggled army to this 'Land of the Setting Sun', beyond which one could travel no further by land. Here, in Fes, on the eastern bank of the seasonal Oued Fes, after a set-to with the indigenous Berber tribesmen, he started to build what was to become the first Islamic settlement in Morocco.



Welcome to this different world, so reminiscent of a Jerusalem of 1000 years ago. With its two hundred mosques and holy shrines, Fes contains more places of worship than any other city in Morocco. At its peak, early in the thirteenth century, Fes el-Bali alone boasted almost eight hundred mosques and mausoleums for its 125,000 inhabitants. By the seventeenth century, however, the Scottish traveller William Lithgow reported that places of worship were far outstripped by some twelve thousand licensed brothels and, as the Victorian era traveller Budgett Meakin remarked: "Fes us at once the most religious and the most wicked city in Morocco...the saints and sinner being for the most part, identical..." With ancient ramparts set against a backdrop of the not-too-distant Middle Atlas Mountains you'll know you're in for a very different experience; one that our professionally-guided visit will take you to the bustling maze of alleyways of the fascinating medina and souks offering every possible combination of beautiful pottery, Berber carpets,

Fassi brassware, Jewish-originated silverware, traditional and modern jewellery, beautiful leather goods all amidst the pungent aromas of spices, herbs and oils. Take in with us the ancient living monuments this city of One Thousand and One Nights has to offer the serious tourist. Fes, one of the pillars of Islam, once harboured the most celebrated of Jewish communities and scholars.

Is it Fes or Fez? It is both; and neither. The Western name for the city is drawn from the Arabic *Fas* and, as there is no one correct way to transliterate Arabic words into Western characters, in the French language, the city is referred to as *Fés*, while Americans tend to use *Fez*. Fassin, or Fassis as the residents call themselves, use the pronunciation of *Fas*, so derived from three Arabic letters fa (f), alif (a) and sin (s). So everyone wins.



As soon as you ready after breakfast, we make for the impressive Dar el Makhzen and a 15 minute stop at the Royal Palace with its magnificent seven bronze gates. From here we walk to and through the Mellah with its intense atmosphere and fine examples of Mauro-Hispanic architecture. We now drive to the Borj Sud, here to take in the panoramic view of the Medina. Off now down to start our Walking Tour of the labyrinth of the ancient Fes Medina and Mellah (a UNESCO World Heritage Site); of the Bou Inania Mosque and the Maimonides' clock; of the colourful es-Sabbaghine with its Street of the Dyers; of the brass workers at es-Saffarine; of the impressive al-Quarawiyyin Mosque and University (exterior only) and the el-Atterine Medersa (exterior only) passing the aromas of the Souq el-Atterine area of spices and groceries to the delightful el-Nejjarine Square with its fountain and caravanseraï, stopping nearby for a light lunch. On now to the renowned Tanneries on the bank of the Oued Fes and thence on to the potteries, perfumes and beauty products at the Souq el-Henna. Leaving the Medina from the Bab Boujloud, we tour the magnificent ramparts with its beautiful 'Babs' as we make our way to the 16th century Saâdien watchtower at the North Borj and the Dar Batha Museum with its collection of carpets, woodwork to arrive back at your hotel or riad after a day full of contrasting culture and journey into some 1,200 years of history. **BLD.**

DAY 10: FES - MEKNES - VOLUBILIS - MOULAY IDRIS - FES. After breakfast we shall now set out alongside a forest of cork-oak to the Imperial City of Meknes (whose Medina is a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Arab historians trace the origins of Meknes to the Roman occupation of Morocco from 3B.C to 40A.D, perhaps as a forward post for the neighbouring Roman city of Volubilis during the search for timber and volcanic rock required for construction which the nearby Middle Atlas Mountains must have provided in plenty. Recent archaeological finds, however, do not offer convincing proof that there was a virtual Romanisation of this settlement that would later develop into the great capital of legendary King Moulay Ismail. This, one of our kingdom's four Imperial Cities, was developed in the 10th century by the Zenata tribe of the Meknassa Berbers as *Meknassa es -Zeitoun* ("Meknes of the Olives"), a group of villages among olive groves around Takarart, an 11th century Berber Almoravid citadel. Situated west of the Saïss plain between the pre-Riffian elevation of Zerhoun and the foothills of the Middle Atlas, Meknes was chosen by Moulay Ismaïl in 1672 to be the capital of his empire. Enjoying a strategically-central position vis-à-vis other regions in Morocco, Meknes sits on a plateau serving as a virtual cross roads for the South-North camel caravan traders and settlers. Throughout its history, its importance grew due to the location, clement weather, abundant water supplies and surrounding fertile plains. The city's unity of style lends it undeniable charm, unchanged for centuries, enhanced still further by the beauty of the surrounding



countryside. Moulay Ismaïl's creation was to be much talked of in the East and in Europe, most especially at the French court of King Louis XIV and was once called "the Moroccan Versailles". Here we shall visit its 40 km of Ramparts and monumental gates such as the easily most beautiful Bab, or gateway, in all of the Maghreb - the Bab Mansour. From here to the El Heri es-Souani - the granary of huge vaulted structures and stables - once accommodating the Sultan's 20,000 Arabo-Berber 'Barb' horses - built by Moulay Ismaïl's soldiers next to a pool fed by underground channels that brought fresh water all the way from the distant Middle Atlas Mountains; the Christians' Prison, the splendid Moulay Ismaïl Mausoleum and the Place el-Hedim. We leave Meknes for the wonderful Roman ruins at Volubilis, the Volubilis of really ancient olive presses, mansions, incredible mosaics, monumental arches and Corinthian columns where you'll have a real sense of Roman lifestyle and of that of a subsequent medieval Berber town. The site contains the Mansion containing the mosaic of the Labours of Hercules, the Baths of Gallienus and Baths of Forum with their fragmentary mosaics; the House of Orpheus and its Dolphin mosaic and Orpheus Myth; the Cortege of Venus many of whose mosaics we may only see from the outside yet will get to see the medallions of Bacchus, Diana and the Abduction of Hylas; the Gordian Palace with its bath house and pooled courtyards; the House of the Wild Beast, the House of Nymphs, the House of the Seasons, the House of Flavius Germanus, the Knights House with an incomplete mosaic of Dionysus Discovering Ariadne Asleep, the Triumphal Arch, the Capitol and the House of Ephebus with its pictorial mosaics, especially that of Bacchus Being drawn



in a Chariot by Panthers. We shall break for lunch at the Hotel Volubilis inn with its panoramic view of the ruins to leave Volubilis behind and drive alongside the dark, outlying ridges of the Zerhoun Hills for a panoramic view of the town of Moulay Idriss, the holiest Islamic town in the kingdom of Morocco, where thousands of Moroccan faithful come on pilgrimage (*mousslem*) every August to pray at the tomb of this descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. This small hilltop town was named after the Sultan Moulay Idriss the Elder, who oppressed the resident Jews, forcing many of them to convert. It was he who also founded Fes. 70 years ago, it was prohibited to non-Muslims to enter the town. In 788 (or 787) A.D, an event occurred that was to forever change the path of Moroccan culture. Idriss Ibn Abdallah (or Moulay Idriss I as he is called here in Morocco), the great-grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, had fled west from Baghdad to settle in Morocco. The heir to the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus, Moulay had participated in a revolt against the Abbasid dynasty which had usurped the leadership of the Umayyad dynasty to precipitate the split between the Shia and Sunni sects. Forced to flee Abbasid assassins, Moulay initially found asylum in Tangier but soon thereafter tried to establish himself in the old Roman city of Volubilis. Before long he moved to the nearby region of Zerhoun, where he founded the town that is now called either Moulay Idriss or Zerhoun. The local Berber tribes, passionate neophytes of Islam, were convinced of Moulay's power to lead as both sultan and *iman* (spiritual guide) and his exemplary



conduct soon ensured his lordship over many of the Berber tribes. We shall see the elongated square, the green-tiled pyramids of

the Zaouiat with its two conical quarters on either side and the labyrinth of alleyways before returning to the Imperial City of Fes and your hotel for a well-earned rest. **BLD.**

DAY 11: FES - CASABLANCA: After breakfast this morning, we set out on the penultimate day in the wondrous kingdom of



Morocco as set out first west then south to Casablanca, first check into our hotel, thence to be taken for a tour of this bustling metropolis, the second largest city in Africa after Cairo, when we rejoin our awaiting vehicle to proceed first up to Anfa, the elegant residential district built on a hill dominating the city. This is the original site of Casablanca (the *Anafa* of the Phoenicians) where you'll appreciate the main avenues, green parks and especially the magnificent and variously constructed villas illustrating the evolution of the architectural concepts of the early 1930s to today. 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. We continue on to the Corniche where a stop is made for a light lunch overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Suitably refreshed, we continue down to the Mohammed V Square which groups buildings of the main administrative departments in attractive modern architecture inspired by national traditions. To the west, a monumental fountain was built in 1976: at certain hours, one can admire water shows accompanied by Arabic, European or Asian music. On



the other side of the Avenue Hassan II, there is a public garden bordering the Law Courts and the Préfecture. Between these two buildings, behind the railings of the French Consulate, is the statue of Marshal Lyautey by François Cogné, sculptor of the Clemenceau of Champs-Élysées in Paris. From here past Art deco buildings via the bustling Central Market, a kaleidoscope of colour, charm and street musicians; of fresh fish, freshly-cut flowers, fruit, and spices, thence for a stroll to visit of the interior of the Mahakma Court of Islamic Law; this beautiful building was erected in 1952 with no fewer than 60 rooms, delightfully-decorated in the Hispano-Mauresque style to be used simultaneously a Law Court and the Pasha's (Governor's) Reception Hall. On now to the New Medina, or Habous Quarter. The fast

development of Casablanca attracted thousands of people from all over the country in search of employment to settle down at first near the ancient Medina, then around the city, in miserable encampments. To reduce these '*Bidonvilles*', the new Medina was constructed in 1923 during the period of the French Protectorate respecting the traditional style whilst applying the rules of modern town planning. The immediate neighbourhood around the old Mosque and especially that part of the Medina to the northeast offers



picturesque alleys lined with arches under which shopkeepers of every sort ply their trade and where you'll find the Brass Souk, where artisans shape and polish cauldrons, trays, teapots and an entire space dedicated to the sale of olives. Here, too, is the renowned Patisserie Bennis Cake Shop which opened in 1938, Casablanca's oldest Patisserie and whose sign is the only thing distinguishing it from the rest of the buildings, but whose interior, decorated with amazing mosaics, shelters one thousand and one delicacies. On we stroll past the main entrance to the King's Palace which now houses the administrative offices for the region of Casablanca. From here we shall continue in our car to the Church of Notre Dame de Lourdes finished in 1956 following the design of a Mr. Dangleterre. The interior deserves to be seen for the large stained glass window by Gabriel Loire, chief glassworker in Chartres, contrasting with the wooden copula of the choir, depicting the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the visitations at Lourdes and other visitations of the Virgin Mary. Back into our vehicle to the busy United Nations Square. Under the nearby walls of 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 may make a stop here for last-minute shopping, should you so wish, before returning to your hotel. **BL.**



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

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

OUR PRICE WILL INCLUDE: Accommodation at recommended or similar hotels/riads including relevant taxes, *subject always to availability at time of reservation*. Porterage on 1 piece of luggage per person in/out airports & hotels/riads. Meal schedule as outlined in the itinerary or modified in accordance with instructions. Private circle trip transportation in an air-conditioned vehicle from Casablanca to Casablanca. Sightseeing tours and all related entrance fees as listed in the itinerary. Bottled water en-route. Medical and Accident Insurance.

OUR PRICE WILL NOT INCLUDE: Gratuities to waiters, guide and chauffeur. 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 your sensitive lenses; sunglasses, sunscreen, swimming costume (seasonal).