

## 7 Hour Excursion Ship to Ship

Subject to your ship's schedule and number of participants, the itinerary may change in order of visits shown, but all mentioned will be seen.



Leaving our ship behind we make our way north to the administrative Imperial capital since 1912 of the Kingdom of Morocco, Rabat (R'bat al Fat'h - The Victory Camp) - one of the four Imperial Cities, founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 it 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 5<sup>th</sup> century, thence to fall into ruins to be transformed, late in the 14<sup>th</sup> 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 beautiful garden of date and banana palm trees, hibiscus, bougainvillea, olive and fig trees. 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. 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 similar 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. Time now for a break for a light lunch thence to proceed to the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 enjoy the view over 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 19<sup>th</sup> century; the corsairs who captured Miguel de Cervantes; the corsairs mentioned in Doctor Dolittle - the Moroccan Sultan Moulay Ismaïl 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. We leave Rabat along the Atlantic Ocean's coastal road for our return journey to Casablanca, where if time permits, we shall visit the fabulous Hassan II Mosque, the second largest mosque in the Islamic world after the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. This architectural masterpiece, a symbol of an Islam open to the world, took 7 years to complete and is built partially on the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, on the farthest western point of the Maghreb. The ground floor holds an oblong Prayer Hall of perfect symmetry. 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. Or you may prefer to have some free time before sailing for shopping in the souq or in the modern shops around the Place Mohammed V. L.

There is about 50 minutes of walking, some of it over uneven and cobbled ground, plus steps to be climbed.

**OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE:** Private circle trip transportation in an air-conditioned vehicle from Port to Port. Medical and Accident insurance. Private guided sightseeing excursion and all related entrance fees as listed in the itinerary. Light lunch or refreshments. Bottled or gaseous water. An English-speaking Licensed National Guide throughout.

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

**IT IS RECOMMENDED YOU BRING WITH YOU:** Good trainers; hat, pullover (seasonal); day pack; hygienic 'wipes;' camera and Ziploc bags for sensitive lenses; sunglasses, sunscreen.

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