



DURATION 13 - 14 HOURS SHIP TO SHIP

This excursion requires a total walking time of about 3 hours.



Your journey to this jewel in North Africa's crown has brought you within reach of the exciting, fascinating and two thousand year old Imperial City of Fes, surrounded as it is by 9 miles of ramparts situated in a narrow valley, strategically positioned on the old caravan crossroads which once connected the one-time Saharan empires with the Atlantic and Mediterranean trading routes to Europe. The city that was once, after Mecca and Medina, held to be one of the holiest cities in the Islamic world; the city whose merchants were travelling to China in the 15th century; the city that (of least importance) gave its name to the red cylindrical brimless hat. Moroccans say that Marrakech, Rabat and Casablanca live in the present, but that Fes certainly still lives in the past. No surprises here, for European chroniclers of the Middle Ages wrote with awe of this city that for several centuries was the most civilised Western outpost of the Semitic world. Its scholars introduced astronomy and medicine to the West via Spain when that country was under Moorish rule. Historians of the time said that the writings of both Plato and Aristotle first reached Western Europe in Arabic translations - from 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 17th 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 is 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 a 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.

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.



Leaving your ship behind, we make our way north along the littoral via Al-Muhammadiyah to skirt the Imperial City of Rabat, here to turn east along another expressway via Khemisset and the southern outskirts of the Imperial City of Meknes to the Imperial City of Fes-el-Bali for our tour of the Mellah, the Medina and Souqs, the famous Tanneries, the exquisite Mosques and Medersas, the famous Fes Pottery Kilns, the ramparts with its many Babs at the Méchouar of the impressive Dar el Makhzen (King's Palace) to stop here for some 15 minutes to admire the magnificent seven bronze gates, to continue on to the Borj Sud for a panoramic view of the Medina. Off now down to start our Walking Tour of the labyrinths of the ancient Fes Medina (a UNESCO World Heritage Site); of the colourful es-Sabbaghine with its Street of the Dyers; of the brass and copperware workers at es-Saffarine; on through the winding alleyways to the impressive el-Quarawiyyin Mosque and University (we may not enter, but may take photographs from the impressive doorway), to continue our stroll into the past to the wonderful Mosque and adjacent aromatic Souq el-Attarine of a myriad spices and vegetables; the beautiful el-Attarine Medersa (School of Koranic learning); the Kissaria and Draz Quarters and on to the renowned Tanneries on the bank of the Oued Fes (buy a sprig of mint as the smell can get to you!). On now to the delightful el-Nejjarine Square with its Plaza, fountain, caravanserail and Museum of artistry in woodwork. Nearby we'll stop for a very welcome light lunch (alcoholic drinks excluded) at a delightful restaurant. On now to the Dar Batha to visit the Museum of Moroccan Art before rejoining our vehicle at the Bab Boujloud. That's the walking done for the day, for now we drive to the 16th century Potters' Quarter (*Fakhkharin*), not far from the present-day Bab Ftouh in an area called *Gueraouaoua*, to watch the artisans working at their kilns and, perchance, to buy some of their unique clay ware. Back into our vehicle and on now for a tour around the magnificent ramparts with its beautiful Babs and up to the 16th century Saâdien watchtower at the North Borj for a final, yet so different, panoramic view of this city of 1001 Nights. So much history, so much variety, so many memories to be captured on film before returning to Casablanca at the end of an exceptional day.



This tour involves a long drive, even with a comfort stop in each direction, and the charming alleyways and plazas are heaving with people. The walk through the Medina will be a very crowded experience over sometimes uneven ground, and you will be invited by shopkeepers to purchase their wares, yet the effort is well worth it for the sheer magic of having had but a small taste of this legendary city.

OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE: Private circle trip transportation in an air-conditioned vehicle according to group size - from port to port. Private guided sightseeing excursion and all related entrance fees as listed in the itinerary. Light lunch and bottled water en-route. An English-speaking Licensed National Guide throughout. Medical and Accident Insurance.

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

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