

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK ON A MOROCCAN HONEY TRAIL

9 HOURS SHIP TO SHIP



We shall set out for our quick immersion into Moroccan culture by taking the route up 216m to the pisé (rammed earth) walls of the mainly-in-ruins Kasbah on the hill, remnants of a prosperous past dominating the new city of Agadir, to give us a glorious panoramic view of the commercial port where our ship is docked; of the fisherman's port; of 9 km of extensive sandy bay and the gentle white city with its main avenues - Mohammed V and Hassan II and the Boulevard 20 Août with its many restaurants and tourist shops; of the very popular Corniche where the residents of Agadir love to come to take a stroll; of the verdant Souss Valley; of the distant Anti Atlas mountains and of the stark savagery of the Tichka Plateau all laid out before us. From this vantage point we shall set out north on the road to Essaouira passing first barren rock which give way to a winding mountain road twisting through the dramatic scenery of stark ochre rocks bearing witness to ancient seismic forces, dwarf date palms, yellow limestone gorges, bubbling fresh water ravines and verdant tree clad slopes of juniper, argan and pink laurel of the Western High Atlas Tichka Plateau, these same mountains which start here at the Atlantic Ocean and stretch as far away as Tunisia. Once through the Tizi (col) N'Ssi we drop into the vast oasis of Tamzerghout with its date and banana palm, olive and orange trees. Here you'll find the Berbers with their tiny stands selling fossils, including ammonites, oysters, and mussels dating from the Cretaceous Period for, some 70 million years ago this area lay under the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. We carry on up through a pass for some 12 kilometres where on both sides breaks which open onto oases, ravines, springs, hamlets and villages and natural pools called The Giants' Cooking Pot.



We shall soon arrive at the simple mountain hamlet of Imouzzer Des Ida Outnane and a charming little hotel set high up in the hills where we shall break for a lunch of Moroccan salad, meat tagine with nuts and honey, apple tart, oranges in cinnamon, mint tea and bottled water. This region in the Souss province is noted for its outstanding and unique, succulent honey of traditional highland blend called *amlou* farmed from the bees, housed in natural hives made from great cane pods screened from the sun by bouquets of drying herbs, that browse on wild thyme, lavender, marjoram and several other exotic mountain flowers (whose secret is well-kept) all mixed with argan oil and almonds. Seated around the terrace amidst gardens of vines, apple, almond and olive trees, rose bushes and hollyhocks, we shall enjoy a marvellous vista of the stunning hillside back country. In spring, this area is a carpet of almond trees in blossom and the waters of the nearby waterfall of Tamarout reach flood levels. On Thursday there is a souk where the Berber inhabitants of this region come to make their weekly trade and purchases. After lunch we shall venture forth astride donkeys for a 45 minute ride up through the hamlet and olive groves, passing by canyons and small oases to the foot of the spectacular waterfall of several levels with its ice-cold mineral plunge pools and petrified canopy of rocks whitened by centuries of limestone crystallisations which have been given the name of The Bride's Veil. Relatively dry from May to October, these falls are then noted more for their rock formations than for any volume of water, rent in several places to reveal secretive dripping caves glistening with moss and fern offering a somewhat pagan charm. With any luck, you might get to see a Bonelli's eagle, a golden eagle and crag martins. We may ride back down, or be met here by our coach or minibus, to continue through to the beautiful Paradise Valley, so named by Jimmy Hendrix in the 1960s when the area was part of the hippy trail and frequented by many of the group followers who used to camp on the rivers banks for the winter. They lived here 'in paradise' and cultivated the surrounding ground. Nowadays you can still see the date palms and cultivated grounds with fruit trees like olive, figs, bananas and oranges. After the hippies abandoned the area some locals took over. The Paradise Valley (so named by Jimi Hendrix) or Taghrat Ankrim in Amazigh, the local language of the Berbers, is a 7km long green and narrow valley along the Ankrim River. We finally rejoin the main road back to Agadir and our awaiting ship after a unique adventure into Morocco's Berber back country.

OUR PRICES WILL INCLUDE: Private circle trip transportation in an air-conditioned vehicle from Agadir Port. Medical and Accident insurance. Private guided sightseeing excursion with an English-speaking Licensed National Guide throughout. Bottled or gaseous water en-route. Lunch.

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

IT IS RECOMMENDED YOU BRING WITH YOU: Day packs; hat, hygienic 'wipes,' camera and Ziploc bags for sensitive lenses; sunglasses, sunscreen, swimming costume according to the season.