



Insider's Morocco

April 26 - May 11, 2024 (16 days)

With its surreal landscapes of red-rock canyons, the endless golden dunes of the Sahara, ancient casbahs sprawled among green oases, the exquisite Roman ruins at Volubilis, and the delights of the imperial cities of Fes, Meknes, Rabat, and Marrakech, Morocco is an enchanting feast for the senses. On this fascinating journey with trip leader Cathy Ann Taylor, you'll get an authentic insider's perspective and gain true insights of this intriguing realm, with overnights in atmospheric *riads* (traditional Moroccan guesthouses), concerts by local musicians, lunch in a family home (be prepared to savor genuine Moroccan home cooking!), and a camel trek to a special luxury desert camp in the Sahara for a night under the stars, complete with festive singing and dancing. Come join us!

TRIP DETAILS

Moderate ▶ Overland travel and cultural explorations, some light walking/hiking; 15 nights hotels or riads, 1 night in luxury camp

ITINERARY

Day 1, April 26 ▶ Arrive in Fes

Upon arrival in Fes, you will take a taxi to Riad Ghita. If you arrive at Casablanca April 25 we will provide a transfer up to Fes (as a group) stopping in Rabat for a quick tour and lunch on April 26. We'll then head to Fes for check-in and after some rest have our trip briefing. In the evening, we'll enjoy a delicious Welcome Dinner. Overnight at Riad Ghita, decorated in period style. Riads are traditional Moroccan houses with an interior courtyard or garden—often with a trickling fountain—and offer a unique lodging experience. L,D...Riad Ghita (or similar)
Driving Details: 30 minutes or 3 hours



Day 2, April 27 ▶ Fes | Chefchaouen

After breakfast, we will drive through the beautiful foothills of the Rif Mountains. Passing through small towns and villages into the Rif Mountains with a stop for lunch in one of the small towns. After we check in into our Riad, we will have a guided tour of the beautiful blue City located in the Rif Mountains. Chefchaouen is a 15th century small town with a fortress. It was built as a refuge, by the Jews and Muslims who fled persecution in Spain after inquisition. It's famous for its strikingly blue painted walls and streets and beautiful crafts. B,L,D...Riad Nila (or similar)
Driving details: 3.5 hours

Day 3, April 28 ▶ Chefchaouen | Fes

After breakfast, we can hike up in the Rif mountains to the Spanish mosque built during Spanish colonization of North of Morocco (1.5 hour hike) On our way to Fes, we will make a short stop explore the 2,000-year-old Roman ruins of Volubilis, the best preserved in the country, where we get a picture of life during the Roman Empire. We'll drive through the 17th century Medina of Meknes, where we will stop for pictures of the large gate of Bab-el-Mansour, the Mausoleum of Sultan Ismail with its cheery yellow walls. A drive on backcountry roads brings us through beautiful hills and olive groves to Fes, the spiritual capital of Morocco. B,L,D...Riad Ghita (or similar)
Driving Details: 3.5 hours

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Day 4, April 29 ▶ Fes

Fes is one of the world's largest walled cities, dating back to the 9th century, and our guided tour takes in the *medina* (old town center), still a bustling center of daily life. We explore the narrow streets lined with shops selling fresh fruit, mounds of colorful spices, intricately woven Berber carpets, and many art objects. A visit to the King's Palace, the tanneries, and potters are just a few places we will experience. Fes is where the history of Berber, Jewish,



and Andalusian crafts meet, and the result is a unique *mélange* of shapes, symbols, and colors that are expressed in every object, from textile and pottery to woodwork and mosaics. After lunch in a traditional restaurant in the heart of the medina, we visit one of the *madrassas* (schools of theology) that is part of Al Quraweene, the first university in the world. In the late afternoon we return to our riad for the evening.

B,L,D...Riad Ghita (or similar)

Day 5, April 30 ▶ Fes | Midelt

We begin our traverse of the Middle Atlas Mountains toward the Sahara Desert. Our route takes us through beautiful forests, jagged rock faces, and Berber villages as we cross the Atlas Mountains and begin to descend toward the Sahara Desert. Midway, we spend the night in Midelt, where we visit a few sites and the local market before enjoying an intimate concert by local musicians in the evening. Overnight at Villa Pomme d'Or, with its outdoor pool and on-site restaurant.

B,L,D...Villa Pomme d'Or (or similar)

Driving Details: 4 hours

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Day 6, May 1 ▶ Midelt | Sahara Desert

A drive through oases and palmeries brings us to the desert town of Erfoud, where we'll take a break and visit some fossil shops and a Berber carpet and Touareg jewelry gallery. In the afternoon, we head off across the barren land to the majestic Sahara sand dunes.

Here we set off by camel for a short trek to camp, stopping along the way to savor a spectacular Sahara sunset. Our camp, set in the heart of the famous Erg Chebbi Dunes, is

luxurious, with spacious “nomad”-style tents outfitted with beds and en suite toilet and shower. You don't have to bring a thing—everything is provided. Once at camp, we enjoy dinner, music, and dance with the locals before heading to our tents for the night. You can also pull your mattress out and sleep on the sand under the stars! Note: The camel ride to camp can be optional if you prefer to stay at an inn in Erfoud—but you won't want to miss a night out in the Sahara!

B,L,D...Bivouac Azawad (or similar)

Driving Details: 4 hours

Camel Trek: 1.25 hours



Day 7, May 2 ▶ Sahara Desert | Todra Gorges

After a majestic sunrise, we're back on the road. Before leaving the Sahara, we will visit a nearby village where we will be able to attend a mini-concert by local musicians, and then have a local specialty dish for lunch in a small family-owned restaurant. After lunch, we set out below the High Atlas Mountains en route to the Todra Gorges. In the late afternoon, we take a walk up the towering Todra Gorges (600'). We overnight in the Dades Valley at Chez Ichou, a sustainable and eco-friendly place.

B,L,D... Chez Ichou (or similar)

Driving Details: 4 hours

Day 8, May 3 ▶ Todra Gorges

In the morning we go for a walk in the Dades Valley, where we'll see the traditional lifestyle of the farmers working their fields. Delicious dates are in season this time of year, and this is the place to buy them! Following our walk, we visit some villages up in the mountains (a 30-minute drive). We may also have lunch there. Time permitting, we can go for a walk in the terraced alfalfa fields, or head back to the hotel and relax for the rest of the afternoon. After dinner, we will have a music party.

B,L,D... Chez Ichou (or similar)

Day 9, May 4 ▶ Todra | Ouarzazate

We drive through the Dades Valley on the way to Ouarzazate, the land of a thousand *casbahs* (fortresses). Tucked away in the High Atlas Mountains, Ouarzazate is one of the jewels of Morocco. Its setting has been used for more films than any other location in Morocco, including *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, and *The Gladiator*. After lunch in Ouarzazate, we go straight to Ait Ben Haddou, a casbah from the 11th century.



Overnight at Hotel Ksar Ighnda.

B,L,D...Hotel Ksar Ighnda (or similar)

Driving Details: 3 hours

Day 10, May 5 ▶ Ouarzazate | Taroudant

We explore the casbah and the village, then head over the majestic High Atlas Mountains to the walled town of Taroudant. Time permitting, we can explore the center square of the medina. Overnight at Riad Dar Tourkia, a charming guesthouse in the heart of the casbah.

B,L,D...Riad Dar Tourkia (or similar)

Driving Details: 4 hours



Day 11, May 6 ▶ Taroudant | Tiout

We drive 40 minutes to Tiout, a small village oasis where we go for a hike and learn about the life of the Berbers. After lunch, we return to Taroudant and explore the old town and its market.

B,L,D...Riad Dar Tourkia (or similar)

**Day 12, May 7 ▶ Taroudant |
Essaouira**

After breakfast we depart for the coastal city of Essaouira. Along the way we can stop for a morning walk on the beach in the city of Agadir, then continue along the coast through an argan forest. On the way we will visit the Women's Cooperative for Argan Oil (argan is a famous Moroccan oil used in cosmetics). Our accommodation tonight is the Hôtel Coté Océan, set on the beach. After checking in, we have time to explore Essaouira, rest at the hotel, or perhaps ride a horse or camel on the beach.

B,L,D...Hôtel Coté Océan (or similar)

Driving Details: 3 hours



Day 13, May 8 ▶ Essaouira

The day is free for exploring on your own. Essaouira is a small, very laid-back coastal town with lots of arts and crafts. You can check out the medina, walk on the beach, admire the local arts and crafts (especially the wood carvings), and maybe enjoy some good seafood.

B,D... Hôtel Coté Océan (or similar)



**Day 14, May
9 ▶ Essaouira | Imi
N'Tanout | Marrakech**

After breakfast we head to Imi N'Tanout and on to a nearby village of just a few houses where our assistant guide, Fattah, grew up. We'll enjoy lunch at his home with his parents, along with their superb hospitality, then head for Marrakech and the Bab Hotel, a beautiful retreat in the center of town. After checking in at the hotel, we

go to the internationally famous square, Djemaa el-Fna, with its collection of acrobats, drummers, musicians, dancers, and more.

B,L,D...Bab Hotel (or similar)

Driving Details: 2 hours

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Day 15, May 10 ▶ Marrakech

After breakfast, we enjoy a guided tour of Marrakech, the southern pearl of Morocco. Our tour includes the not-to-be-missed botanical garden of Jardin Majorelle, Palace of the Bahia, Saadian Tombs, and many other hidden treasures. After lunch, we continue to the magnificent Koutoubia Mosque, with its 200-foot-tall minaret, and the Djemaa el-Fna. We'll also explore the *souk* (market), with its many wonderful riches for sale.

B,L,D...Bab Hotel (or similar)

Day 16, May 11 ▶ Marrakech | Depart

Transfer to the airport and depart on a homeward-bound flight.

B...

LAND COST

\$7195 per person (10-13 members)

\$7495 per person (8-9 members)

\$7795 per person (6-7 members)

*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3.5%, the fee we incur from the bank.

Note—Prices listed are subject to change. We are occasionally faced with unavoidable cost increases (flights, etc.) or currency fluctuations that we cannot absorb. We will, however, do everything we can to keep prices the same as published.

Single Supplement—\$1000 for requested singles or forced singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you wish to share accommodations, we'll try to match you up with a roommate. If that's not possible, we will still have to charge the full single supplement.

LAND COST INCLUDES...

- Expert leadership of Cathy Ann Taylor and local guides throughout.
- Accommodation in hotels, with 1 night camping (luxury camp arrangements are included).
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner).
- Water with meals.
- Airport transfers in Marrakech.
- Sightseeing as noted in the itinerary.
- Wine with 2-3 meals.
- Ground transportation in late model 17-passenger Mercedes Benz.
- Entrance fees to museums and permits.
- Tipping to restaurants and hotels.

LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...

International airfare to Fes (or Casablanca) and return from Marrakech; insurance (it is required that you purchase travel insurance which includes trip cancellation and emergency evacuation); optional

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tipping to leader and local guide; meals not noted on itinerary (1 lunch); excess baggage charges; airport taxes (if any); cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages—please note, these are not available everywhere we dine, sodas and beverages other than water, laundry, etc.).

TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation25% of land cost
 120 days prior to departure25% of land cost
 90 days prior to departure.....Balance

CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation
 until 90 days prior to departure25% of land cost
 89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost
 59 days or fewer prior to departure.....100% of land cost

EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

TRIP LEADER



Cathy Ann Taylor, a high-altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 34 years will be leading his trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India, and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her “second home”)! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—six times, Tour of Monte Rosa, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, Scotland—three times, and the Dolomites—two times), the Georgian Caucasus—five times, South America (18 trips in Peru, 6 in Patagonia), Antarctica— two times, Kilimanjaro—one time, Morocco —four times, and Uganda & Rwanda—eight times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer. Cat’s special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (formerly the Breast Cancer Fund). Past trips include Bhutan, Mont Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian

Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks (she has raised \$1,600,000 to date!). Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised \$30,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also raised over \$17,000 for Lama Pasang's Himalayan Children's Care Home which houses 87 children from Mustang. Cathy Ann is also involved in fundraising for the National MS Society has raised over \$70,000 for the organization. She has also reached the summit of Ama Dablam (22,500') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

This trip is rated moderate, and involves overland travel with cultural explorations, plus a few hiking opportunities. You should be in good physical condition for the trip.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

You will need a passport valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip. No visas are required for this trip for US citizens. Note—Make a few photocopies of your passport photo page and carry them separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. Also bring several spare passport photos—they're handy in case of unexpected visa or permit requirements.

AIR TRAVEL

Airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Many travelers elect to use their "frequent flyer" miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip. Note—Names on air tickets and passports must match!

MEDICAL MATTERS

No vaccinations are currently required to enter Morocco, but usual immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are recommended. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information (www.cdc.gov). Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trek (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, painkillers, allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions (especially epi-pens if you are allergic to bee stings), and cold medicines. Moleskin or Second Skin for blisters is also recommended, as well as Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment. Consult your doctor about bringing other medications, such as antibiotics like Cipro for stomach ailments, and azithromycin as a broad-spectrum antibiotic. The trip leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies but will not have any prescription medications. We strongly recommend you get a medical check-up before the trip if you are over 65 years of age. You will need a covid test before boarding your flight in the US and before returning to the US, requirements change frequently so check with your airlines and cdc.

EATING OUT & HYGIENE

Although you need to be careful about eating out in Morocco, we believe it is fun learning experience. Make sure you drink water that is treated or bottled and food that is fully cooked. Most importantly, wash your hands frequently with soap and water and carry hand sanitizer.

MONEY MATTERS

You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy, plus a few lunches that are not included in the cost of the trip (or meals and accommodation en route to Morocco). Depending on how much of a shopper you are, \$500-\$700 should be enough for incidentals and souvenirs. ATMs are available almost everywhere; make sure you make arrangements with your bank. The currency in Morocco is the Moroccan Dirham (MAD). If you bring cash, **be sure to bring crisp US bills no older than 2000; torn and defaced currency may not be accepted.** Some shops take credit cards, but cash is king! The exchange rate as of April 11, 2023, is 10.18 (MAD) per one US dollar.

You should bring an additional amount for optional gratuities to the trip leader, local guides, and camp staff. At least US \$650 per guest is recommended for the trip leader; at least \$350 per guest for the local guide, and \$100 for the driver. You can present your gratuities to your trip leader and local guide individually. When tipping in hotels for your luggage it's generally \$1.00 per bag

WEATHER & CLIMATE

The weather in Morocco during April & May is moderate to warm and comfortable, with daytime temperatures from the high 60s to 80°F, and lows of around 50s to 60s°F.

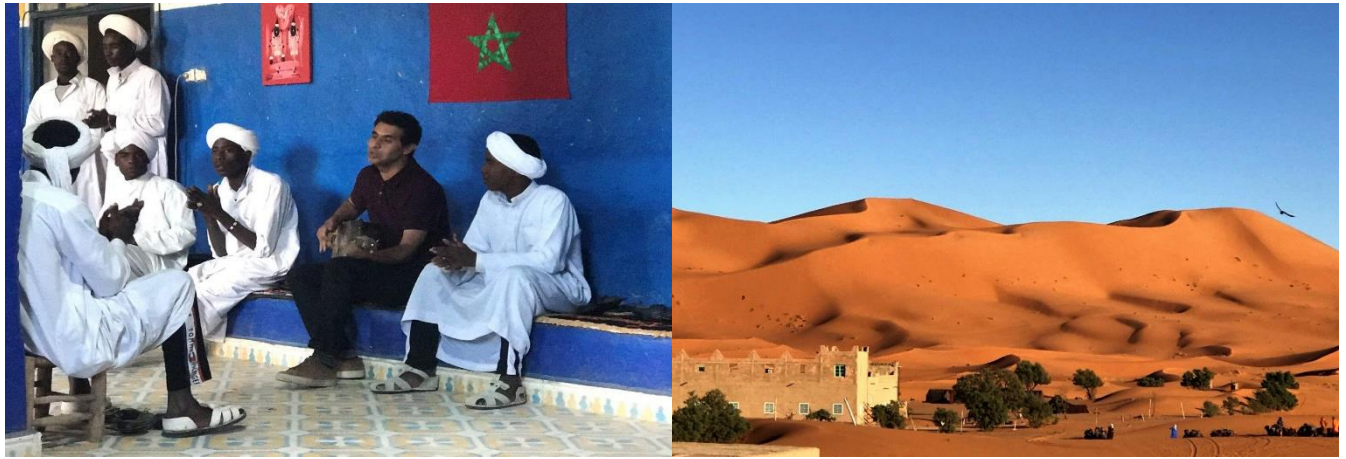
INCIDENTALS

Laundry: Laundry service is available at most of the hotels but can be expensive. We suggest you hand wash a few items and hang them to dry in your room. Synthetic, quick drying fabrics are best (see the equipment list).

Electricity: Most hotels in Morocco feature 220V. Plugs usually have two round pins. It's a good idea to buy a converter set with a selection of plug adapters before you leave the US. If your appliance has a dual voltage switch, you will simply need an adapter plug but not a converter (camera chargers can be used as they are—no need for an adapter). Of course, there won't be electricity when we're camping in the desert.

Time Zones: Morocco is five hours ahead of US Eastern Standard Time.

Communications: Wi-Fi is available almost everywhere we stay, whether in your room or out in the lobby. While we discourage the use of cell phones on our trip, we can't deny the fact that you may want to be in touch with your friends or family. Please be sensitive to the needs of others and use them in the privacy of your room. Contact your cell phone service about international coverage.



WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel. Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as a camera, medications, important documentation, and hiking shoes in your carryon luggage.

Luggage

- Wheeled duffel bag. A good size is about 4882 IN³/ 80 L in volume and 28H X 14W X 13D in dimensions. A regular soft – sided duffel is okay as well, just not too big.
- Daypack with a small capacity of 1,500 -2,000 cubic inches, with a good, padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag.
- Spare roll-up duffel (optional). This is essential if you wish to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

Clothing Notes

Comfortable wrinkle free clothing is best for touring Morocco. Lightweight clothing for the daytime with medium weight wear for the evenings is advisable. Waterproof jackets are also advisable. Both men and women should be culturally sensitive by wearing short or long sleeves (not tank tops) and longer hemmed pants and skirts. We haven't included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the expected weather conditions, your personal needs, and the overall weight restrictions for your luggage.

Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- Thermal underwear— a light weight set, in a synthetic blend (wool is also good) to use to sleep at night in the desert.

Socks

- Casual socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for walking (not hiking) shoes.
- Lightweight hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic).

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or cotton shirts.

Pants

- Full-length synthetic hiking pants.
- Casual pants or long skirts for non-hiking activities (in such places as Fes, Essaouira, Marrakech, etc.).

Outerwear

- Light to medium weight jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece or a lightweight down sweater for evenings.
- Light weight rain jacket.

Head Gear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off, or baseball cap.
- Bandanna or BUFF neck gaiter. A generally useful item—it will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel in the field.

Footwear

- Light - weight, sturdy hiking shoes.
- Comfortable walking shoes to wear while in towns.

Other Items

- Water bottle, 1 quart capacity. Make sure it is leak-proof and heavy duty.
- Toiletry kit—biodegradable soap, toothbrush, feminine products, etc.
- Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- Personal medical kit, including antibiotics and blister protection.
- Body lotion for dry skin.
- Sunglasses (100% UVA/UVB protected).
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.
- Sunscreen lotion and lipstick of SPF 25 or higher.
- Small headlamp with spare batteries.
- Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- Money belt, travel purse or neck pouch to store cash.

Optional Travel Accessories

- Camera and plenty of memory cards.
- Swimsuit for the hotel pools

- Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins.
- Pair of compact binoculars.
- Powdered mixes such as electrolytes for your water.
- Reading and writing material.
- KN94, KN95, N95, or surgical masks.

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