

Morocco Women-only Tour Itinerary

Itinerary dates: January 31 – February 12, 2021

Trip Leader: Beth Whitman

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the largest and the most spectacular mosque with the world's tallest minaret at 689 feet in Africa that non-Muslims can enter, the **Hassan II Mosque**
- Experience the **Fes medina**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its massive area of alleyways of shops, cafes, restaurants and residences
- Experience a **camel ride to Sahara** and enjoy our stay to our Luxury Camp
- Visit another UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Kasbah Ait Benhadou**, an area with a group of earthen dwellings once used as a stopping point for caravans
- Guided tour of **Marrakech**, rich in terms of history, culture and food
- Visit **Jardin Majorelle** filled with exotic plants, flowers, trees, streams and pools all behind an earthen wall

The adventure starts in Casablanca on January 31, 2021. If you'd like to arrive early, we can arrange additional hotel nights prior to the tour.

The tour ends in Essaouira. You can return home or to your next destination via Casablanca or Marrakech.

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Casablanca

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Meals: Dinner

Upon arrival at Casablanca's Mohammed V International Airport, you'll be met by a driver and head to the hotel. You'll have a chance to relax on this day prior to our welcome dinner at **Rick's Café!**

You might know Rick's from the iconic movie, Casablanca. Though this is not the original restaurant from the movie, it is **filled with details** reminiscent of the film -- including the architecture and décor. **The food is great, too!**

Overnight at [Barcelo Anfa](#) or similar in Casablanca.

Day 2 – Casablanca – Chefchaouen

Monday, February 1, 2021

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today will be our first full day of touring. After breakfast, we'll visit the most spectacular mosque that non-Muslims are allowed to enter, the **Hassan II Mosque** on Casablanca's waterfront.

We'll spend time visiting both the exterior and interior of the mosque on a **guided tour**, with plenty of time for photos.

Afterward, we'll make the drive to **Rabat**, less than two hours away. There, we'll visit a **local female artisan** who creates beautiful leather goods including purses, bags and other accessories. We'll then have lunch at a wonderful restaurant in Rabat and then drive onward to **Chefchaouen** (the Blue City) about a five-hour drive away.

We'll arrive at our hotel in the late afternoon and have some time to **relax** before having dinner at the hotel.

Overnight at [Lina Ryad and Spa](#) or similar in Chefchaouen.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** This is the largest mosque in Africa with the **world's tallest minaret** at 689 feet. It's hands down one of the most beautiful buildings in the world and, likely, one of the least known. **It definitely rivals the Taj Mahal.**

Day 3 – Chefchaouen
Tuesday, February 2, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today after breakfast, we'll take a guided tour of this beautiful city perched on the side of a hill. We'll meander through the alleys and (mostly) pedestrian streets to photograph the sea of blue walls, windows, doorways and steps.

Lunch will be on your own to give you time to **wander the streets** and have time for **photographing this inspiring village**. This will also be a great chance to browse the shops tucked away down all the alleys.

In the late afternoon, we'll walk a slight uphill climb to the **Spanish Mosque** and enjoy the sunset there.

Afterward, we'll have **dinner at a fantastic local restaurant**.

Overnight at [Lina Ryad and Spa](#) or similar in Chefchaouen.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** Chefchaouen may be one of the **most beautiful cities** you'll ever visit. Make sure you have a camera because it's difficult to not capture a great image in this Blue City, where everywhere you look, you feel like you might be **swimming in the Mediterranean**.

Day 4 – Chefchaouen – Fes
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After a wonderful breakfast at our ryad, we'll start the drive to Fes. Along the way, we'll stop at **Nzala Women's Cooperative** for a **bread-making workshop**. It's here in the tiny town of N'zalat Bni Amar (pop. 2,000) that these women have also started a **weaving cooperative** to help bring income to their families and to the village. We'll have an amazing **homemade lunch** with them and learn all about their projects.

We'll then drive to **Fes** and check in to our hotel. (Total drive time is about five hours from Chefchaouen to Fes.)

You may want to rest in the late afternoon / evening and have a **relaxing dinner** (not included) at one of the hotel's restaurants or bars. You might also just **relax by the pool** or take advantage of the hotel's spa for a massage or **hammam** visit.

Alternately, for those interested, we can head to Fes's medina and have dinner at **The Ruined Garden** – a truly **magical and authentic Moroccan restaurant** where the architecture and food will delight your senses.

Overnight at [Hotel Sahrai](#) or similar in Fes.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Bread is a staple at every Moroccan meal. And while you may tire of it at some point, you can be sure that when you get home, **you'll be wishing you knew how to make it for yourself!** Today we'll get to do just that. And the ladies who'll be teaching us? They'll charm you to death!

Day 5 – Fes
Thursday, February 4, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

We'll start this morning with breakfast and then an early morning tour of Fes including the **Royal Palace**, the **Jewish Quarter** and the **Qarawiyyin**—the oldest existing, continually operating, higher educational institution in the world. And, it was **started by a woman** (YES!).

Afterward, we'll split into groups and take a **tasting tour of the medina**. This will be during lunch and will be all you need (and then some!) for a lunchtime meal. (You might bring a little baggie to store some treats because you likely can't finish it all!)

After the tasting tour, we'll continue through the medina for a tour of the **tanneries, souqs** and **artisan quarters**, building in some time to shop. We'll also visit a pottery workshop where you'll see artisans making **pottery** of all sizes and styles.

Tonight dinner is on your own. You may not be hungry after the tasting tour but if you are, you can always grab a bite (or more) to eat at one of the hotel's restaurants or bars.

Overnight at [Hotel Sahrai](#) or similar in Fes.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** The **Fes medina** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a massive area of alleyways filled with **shops, cafes, restaurants** and **residences**. It's mind-boggling that anyone could know their way around so we'll be guided to help us through the maze.

Day 6 – Fes – Sahara
Friday, February 5, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today will be a long drive to get to the Sahara (approximately 10 hours) so we'll want to start early.

Along the way, we'll stop for lunch and other breaks to stretch our legs, take some photos, grab a drink and snacks, and use the restroom ☐

We'll arrive at the **edge of the Sahara** in the late afternoon and then take a (optional) camel ride to our **Luxury Camp**. Our luggage, along with anyone interested, will be taken by vehicle. The **camel ride** will take about an hour and we'll have the chance to stop for photos along the way!

We'll settle into our tents and enjoy a **campfire with hors d'oeuvres before dinner**. After an amazing dinner in the **dining tent**, we'll then have a chance to sit by the campfire again, **star gaze** and listen to the **drumming and singing** by the employees who are all quite talented!

Overnight at Luxury Camp or similar in the Sahara.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** You'll feel both **isolated** and **luxuriously relaxed** at the camp. You'll be able to (mostly) only see sand dunes and stars, and you'll be so comfortable, you'll forget you're in a "tent."

Day 7 – Sahara – Ouarzazate
Saturday, February 6, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning, we'll have a leisurely breakfast before taking the **short drive** (no camels this time!) back to the main road and town where we'll meet up with our vehicle for the **drive to Ouarzazate**.

Along the way, we'll stop at **Todra Gorge**, where we'll also have lunch.

This will be another longish day of driving (7.5 hours) so we'll continue on to our hotel to relax this afternoon and evening. This town is really just a **stopping-off point** for us so that we can break up the long drive from the Sahara to Marrakech.

Dinner and overnight at [Berbere Palace](#) or similar in Ouarzazate.

Day 8 – Ouarzazate – Marrakech
Sunday, February 7, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, we'll visit another UNESCO World Heritage site, **Kasbah Ait Benhaddou**. This area consists of a group of earthen dwellings once used as a stopping point for caravans between the Sahara and Marrakech. If you like, you can **make the easy walk to the top**, via windy alleys and shops, to a **viewpoint** looking over the entire valley. From here, you can look down and perhaps recognize some of the scenery from the movie, **Gladiator**, as part of it was filmed here!

We'll continue on our drive and stop for lunch along the way before arriving in Marrakech in the late afternoon.

At night, we'll tour the **Djemaa el-fna**, Marrakech's main square, and then have dinner on our own at one of the city's many restaurants.

Overnight at [La Maison Arabe](#) or similar in Marrakech.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Marrakech is a **vibrant, bustling city** that is busy by day, but downright **ling with energy** by night. We'll visit the main square in the evening where **nightlife explodes** with **vendors, street performers** and **hawkers** of all things.

Day 9 – Marrakech

Monday, February 8, 2021

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today, we'll take a guided tour of Marrakech's highlights including the **Koutoubia, Bahia Palace** and **Saadian Tombs** -- all centrally located. We'll stop for lunch in the medina and then continue with a **guided tour through the medina and souqs**.

After a rest in the late afternoon, we'll have dinner at **Al Fassia**, a **women-owned restaurant** loved by locals and tourists alike and that serves traditional Moroccan fare.

Overnight at [La Maison Arabe](#) or similar in Marrakech.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Marrakech has much to offer in terms of **history, culture** and **food**. We'll get a dose of all of these today during our tour of this city made quite famous by **Crosby, Stills & Nash**.

Day 10 – Marrakech

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we'll drive to the **Atlas Mountains** (about 1.5 hours away) to see the countryside, take in some **fresh air** and see how communities outside of the cities live.

Once we arrive in the village of **Imlil**, we'll take a guided waking tour to a **Berber village and visit a local school**.

We'll then split into smaller groups and have a **traditional lunch in Berber homes**.

After this delicious meal, we'll visit the **Eve Branson Foundation** and the women's cooperatives that are supported by this fantastic non-profit.

For dinner, we'll be taking part in a **tagine cooking** class at our hotel's restaurant, which is renowned for its food.

Overnight at [La Maison Arabe](#) or similar in Marrakech.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** There will be many highlights today, but overall it will be a day of interactions with the **locals**, getting to know them both in the **countryside** and in the **kitchen!**

Day 11 – Marrakech – Essaouira

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today we'll have breakfast at **Amal Association**, a non-profit that empowers women through culinary skills. Afterward, we'll visit **Jardin Majorelle** (created by French painter Jacques

Majorelle). This oasis in the city is filled with **exotic plants, trees, flowers, streams and pools** all behind an earthen wall and hidden from street view.

We'll then make the drive west toward **Essaouira**, the last stop on this magical trip. Along the way, we'll stop at **Le Val D'Argan winery** for lunch and its accompanied wine tastings.

Dinner is on your own tonight as you may not be hungry after today's food and wine. **Essaouira is a seaside town that's very navigable** and has lots of dining options if you so choose!

Overnight at [Sofitel](#) or similar in Essaouira.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** Today's highlights included **gardens** and **beauty**, both at Majorelle and at the winery. After a few days in the city, you'll appreciate these feasts for the eyes.

Day 12 – Essaouira
Thursday, February 11, 2021
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today is, sadly, our **last day of touring in Morocco**. We'll make it easy on you and include just a morning of touring the **medina, harbor and sqala** (the city's fort from the 18th century).

Today you'll have lunch on your own and an afternoon free to **eat, shop, relax, walk or pack**.

This evening we'll have a **farewell dinner** at a wonderful local restaurant.

Overnight at [Sofitel](#) or similar in Essaouira

Day 13 – Essaouira – Departure
Friday, February 12, 2021
Meals: Breakfast

Today is, sadly, departure day. We won't have a formal farewell breakfast in case you have an early departure but you may have time to say your goodbyes before you leave.

There are a number of options for leaving Morocco. You can fly from Essaouira to Casablanca, drive from Essaouira back to Marrakech and fly home (or onward) from there, or stay in Essaouira and fly via one of these cities at a later time.

**** Itinerary subject to change without notice.**