

Great Explorations



Trip Dates

2010

April 4-13
October 13-22
December 27-Jan 5

Custom trips available
and can start any date.
Call or email for details

2011

April 3-12
October 12-21
December 26-Jan 4

Trip Size

8-16 participants

Total Days:

10 days/ 9 nights

Arrive/Depart:

Ouarzazate / Marrakech

Activity Level:

Moderate
30-40+ miles daily
van supported

Terrain

Gently rolling with some
short steep hills

Morocco, Biking

Exotic and alluring, Morocco offers a fascinating culture; we'll follow the 'trail of the kasbahs' into the Sahara, hike in the High Atlas, bike along the coast to the resort town of Essaouira, explore the town of Marrakech and more...

Only Great Explorations:

- Small groups, extraordinary guides, and authentic experiences.
- A ride you will never forget: the descent from the Tin Mal mosque to Ouirgane with a view of Mt. Toubcal, Morocco's highest.
- An evening to remember: your night in the desert being entertained by a troupe of berber musicians (on the December departure, this co-incides with New Years Eve).
- Private Land Cruiser for each 4 guests, with driver.
- Order off the menu at restaurants you won't find in guidebooks.
- Distinctive, charming hotels too small for larger groups.
- We design and operate our own trips so there are only good surprises.

Itinerary



Day 1 :

Ouarzazate - We suggest connecting by air through Casablanca; we'll be at the airport in Ouarzazate to greet you on arrival and whisk you to our hotel where mint tea and sublime surroundings await.

DAY 2:

Zagora - Following the magical Draa River, we cycle along this fertile valley, where lush palmeries secrete

date palms, olive groves, and citrus trees. We'll stop in Agdz for lunch before continuing on to lively Zagora, which dates from French colonial times. (20, 25 or 60 miles)

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Cost

Land Cost (current year):

US \$3250

Includes 9B/7L/8D

Single Supplement:

US \$400

Bike Rental:

US \$200

Pre-trip Extension:

US\$295

1 additional night in Ouarzazate at a 4-star hotel with 1/2 day guided visits to the sites, and dinner.

Post-trip Extension:

US\$695 pp

2 nights at a hotel rated by Conde Nast as one of the top 100 hotels in the world. Post-trip includes dinner each night at our favourite restaurants in the city and 1/2 day guide for each day.



DAY 3:

M'Hamid - Morning options include an invigorating hike above town lead by a knowledgeable local guide. Our cycling route will lead us to Tamegroute, where we'll visit an ancient library which boasts a magnificent collection of Koranic texts, dictionaries, and astrology works, some on gazelle hides. We will also visit a local co-operative to learn how the distinctive pottery found in this region is made. Afterwards, we'll

continue deep into the Sahara (Tomboctou is only 52 days away by camel caravan). Trading our bikes for camels we'll be lead by Berber escorts to our private tented camp, where festivities await. (20, 30 or 40 miles)

DAY 4:

Ait Ben Haddou - Up with the sun, we'll enjoy breakfast surrounded by dunes before departing the desert. We'll visit a local market, where fruit, vegetables, herbs, handicrafts, sheep, goats and donkeys are brought to be sold. Late afternoon, we'll cycle a quiet road to the UNESCO world heritage site of Ait Ben Haddou. This is Morocco's most spectacular ksour, a collection of towered and crenellated Kasbahs that once guarded the lucrative caravan route through the Atlas mountains. We'll stay at the intimate Hotel La Kasbah, which overlooks the site.(15, 30 or 60 miles)



DAY 5+6:

Ouirgane - We'll transfer today over the High Atlas, beginning our ride along a flat stretch of magnificent road where views of snow-capped peaks and lush farmland provide a dramatic change of scenery. Reaching the Ouirgane valley, we'll stay at a charming hotel with extensive gardens. Next day, we'll hike into local villages where we'll be offered tea and a chance to bake bread in community ovens. Afternoon

options include cycling along the enchanting Oued Nfiss to the extraordinary Tin Mal mosque, built in 1156 and recently restored and open to visitors.

DAYS 7+8:

Essaouira - After a transfer towards Marrakech, we'll turn west towards the coast, beginning our ride with the sight of the Atlantic in the distance. We'll bike a stunning road, dropping to the hip town of Essaouira, famous for its artisan shops, European feel, and several kilometers of sandy beaches. On our second day, we'll join a local historian exploring the medina here, where the maze of tiny streets reveal spice markets, marquetry workshops, ancient hammams and more. Cycling options include routes along the coast; for those who like to walk there are also hikes to secluded beaches from town. We'll stay at the exclusive Maison du Sud, one of the top Riad hotels in the city, located in the heart of the medina.

DAY 9:

Marrakech - Leaving Essaouira we'll reach Marrakech in time for lunch. Afterwards, we'll visit the city's sites including the Marjorelle Gardens, Museum of Yves St. Laurent, and El Bahia Palace; as dusk sets on the extraordinary Jemaa El Fna, we'll watch as snake charmers, acrobats and street performers of every kind imaginable entertain. We'll stay at a wonderful Riad near the historical center and for our final night, dine at one of the most atmospheric restaurants in Morocco.

DAY 10: You can depart at your leisure anytime on this day .

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What's Included in the Cost of Your Trip?

- services of one or more experienced Great Explorations guides and support vehicle
- 9 nights lodging
- all breakfasts, 7 lunches, and 8 dinners
- entrance fees for selected historical sites and museums
- detailed map and route instructions
- all baggage transportation
- all transportation from initial meeting point to final drop-off (see arrive/depart cities)
- all tips in hotels, restaurants etc. (excludes discretionary tips for guides)

Please note: Final itinerary is subject to revision; any changes made are done so in an attempt to provide the best possible trip given route conditions and available services. Due to the nature of our business and exchange rates, prices are subject to change. All prices quoted are U.S. dollars but we gladly accept payment in Canadian dollars also. Due to cancellations and waiting lists, trip availability fluctuates daily. If you have any questions or would like to confirm space on this trip

Accommodations



Mercure Quarzazate, Quarzazate

This 4-star hotel, now a member of the Accor hotel group, offers large pool and is located in a quiet district of town. Its modern exterior has hints of Kasbah; and, the interior offers a unique mix of modern design and traditional Moroccan culture. There is a steam bath, massage, and tennis facilities. The restaurant serves international cuisine and Moroccan specialties.



Kasbah Asmaa Hotel, Zagora

This charming bougainvillea covered hotel boasts a splendid tented dining area with intimate salons showcasing lavish rugs and antiques. The large, comfortable rooms are tastefully decorated and most have balconies overlooking the expansive gardens. Relax at the large pool amid grand palm trees and sample a variety of Moroccan food at one of the many restaurants.

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Berber Tented Camp

Located in the sand dunes of the Sahara, canvas tents with bedding and kerosene lamps will welcome you to this oasis in the desert.



Hotel La Kasbah, Ait Ben Haddou

This hotel has a large, refreshing swimming pool with terraces offering panoramic views over the Unesco site of Ait Ben Haddou. The rooms are modest but comfortable. As this is the only hotel in Ait Ben Haddou, you'll enjoy the peacefulness here and can relax in the Moroccan style courtyard with fountain.



La Bergerie, Ouirgane

Owned by a French couple, this spacious property, located in the countryside near Ouirgane is charming. These lovely grounds, in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains, offer terraced gardens, large pool, and accommodations with a fireplace and traditional Moroccan décor. The panoramic restaurant offers both outstanding views and cuisine.



Villa Maroc, Essaouira

This former private palace has been tastefully renovated into the most stylish and intimate Riad hotel in the city. The Villa, originally two 18th century riads, immerses you in a world of simplicity and warmth enhanced by the flavours of ancestral family cooking. Enjoy the superb views from the rooftop terrace and experience a traditional hammam onsite.



Cles du Sud, Marrakech

Only a few minutes away from the famous Djamaa plaza, this luxurious XVII century Palace has been renovated in traditional Moroccan style. Dedicated to peace, comfort and luxury, this hotel was restored using only the noblest of materials, including marble, and reflects the succulent styling of the south. Relax on the terrace with whirlpool, bar and caidale tent.