



HARVARD

Alumni Association

MORROCCAN DISCOVERY

MAY 13-26, 2016

Encounter ancient ruins and sacred mosques, endless desert and storied mountains, and imposing kasbahs and spirited souks in this land of dramatic contrasts. Travel from the imperial cities of Rabat, Fez, and Marrakech to the High Atlas and vast Sahara. Open your eyes and hearts to a truly foreign land, an age-old culture, and a genuinely hospitable people.



STUDY LEADER: Sue Weaver Schopf is associate dean for the Master of Liberal Arts program at the Harvard Extension School and a lecturer in Extension. She came to Harvard as an Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellow in the humanities in the department of English and American literature and language in 1980, after completing a PhD in English at Vanderbilt University. She first taught in Extension in 1982, and has been associated with the ALM program since 1986, serving first as research advisor in the humanities, then senior research advisor, and finally as director.

In addition to advising graduate students in the humanities on their thesis projects, she teaches writing-intensive literature courses on topics as far ranging as English romantic poetry, Victorian poetry and nonfictional prose, modern poetry, literary criticism and theory, western drama, Milton and *Paradise Lost*, Irish literature, and Orientalism in British literature and visual culture. She has received post-doctoral fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is a winner of the Petra T. Shattuck Excellence in Teaching Prize. In 2006, she was honored for 25 years of teaching in the Extension School. As faculty lecturer on more than 30 Harvard Alumni Association travel-study programs, she has spoken on a variety of literary and art-historical topics throughout England, Europe, Ireland, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, and Egypt.

GROUP SIZE: 12-24 guests

PRICING: Per person double occupancy

- \$5,958 Air Inclusive from BOS, JFK, WAS (\$5,495 air, land inclusive plus \$463 airline taxes and departure fees)
- \$5,095 Land only rate
- \$1,495 Single supplement

Pricing for this tour is tentative

SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, R=Reception

FRIDAY, MAY 13

DEPART U.S. FOR CASABLANCA,
MOROCCO

SATURDAY, MAY 14

CASABLANCA/RABAT

Arrive this afternoon in Casablanca, Morocco's chief port, economic capital, and largest city. You'll meet your Tour Director at the airport then transfer by coach to Rabat, stopping for refreshments along the way. After checking in well-located hotel near famed Hassan Tower, you have time to rest and refresh.

Tonight you'll meet your fellow travelers over a welcome dinner at Dinarjat, a famous restaurant located in Rabat's Old Town.

Overnight: La Tour Hassan (D)

SUNDAY, MAY 15

RABAT

Capital of the French Protectorate of Morocco from 1912 to 1956, and Moroccan capital since independence, Rabat has a European elegance yet maintains an Islamic character all its own. Spend the entire day touring this unique city that also was one of the four ancient capitals, or imperial cities, beginning with the fortified Kasbah des Oudaias that surrounds the 17th-century Royal Palace and the beautiful Andalusian Gardens. Next visit Chellah's Roman relic where the remnants of Sala Colonia, the Roman port that was abandoned in 1154. This afternoon cross the river to Sale and enjoy lunch at a private home. Visit Rabat's newly open Museum of Contemporary Art followed by a short walk through the medina.

Later this afternoon return to the hotel, and dine there tonight.

Overnight: La Tour Hassan (B, L, D)

MONDAY, MAY 16

RABAT/MEKNES/VOLUBILIS/FEZ

This morning depart by motorcoach for Meknes, Morocco's youngest Imperial City and also a UNESCO World Heritage site, whose construction was dominated by the Sultan Moulay Ismail, one of Morocco's most powerful leaders. Despite his reputation as a ruthless warrior, the Sultan was also a builder, and during his 55-year reign developed Meknes from a small town into a majestic capital with gigantic ramparts, monumental gates, more than 50 palaces, and 15 miles of exterior walls.

Visit the impressive Bab el Mansour gateway and the ruins of the imperial stables and granaries. After lunch in a local restaurant continue on to Volubilis, the largest of the Romans' 17 colonies established in Morocco between the 1st century BCE and the 2nd century CE. The excavated ruins here are particularly noted for their colorful mosaics. The setting is a photographer's delight, and you'll have ample time at this UNESCO World Heritage site to take photos. After lunch in a local restaurant, we continue on to Fez, arriving late this afternoon.

Tonight we enjoy a traditional Moroccan dinner together at the hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Sahrai (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, MAY 17

FEZ

"The history of Fez," writes author Walter Harris, "is composed of wars and murders, triumphs of arts and sciences, and a good deal of imagination." And a more fascinating city you won't find anywhere, as we discover on the full-day tour. Begin today with a walking tour of Fez's fascinating *medina*, a UNESCO World Heritage site, focusing on the artisans' quarters, the 14th-century Koranic schools, and Al Karouine, the medieval theological university that opened in 859 and is believed to be older than its European counterparts Oxford and Bologna. Enjoy lunch together in the medina then mid-afternoon tour the old *mellah* (Jewish quarter) and its 17th-century synagogue, the royal gates, and the Museum of Fez.

Tonight enjoy dinner together at an intimate family-run riad, La Maison Bleue.

Overnight: Hotel Sahrai (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18 FEZ

This morning we return to the medina to discover some hidden treasures, including the Blue Gate, the most picturesque of all the Old City's historic gates; the medieval school of Bouanania; and the 12th-century home of Jewish scholar Maimonides. We also visit the traditional quarter to watch artisans craft the acclaimed Fez pottery and ceramics. The remainder of the afternoon is free for independent exploration and lunch on our own.

Tonight dine together in the hotel's international restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel Sahrai (B, D)

THURSDAY, MAY 19 FEZ/MIDELT/ERFOUD

Today will be a long day spent venturing out to the Sahara as a substantial distance is covered driving to Erfoud. Traveling inland, you cross the fertile plains beyond Fez and continue through the Middle Atlas mountain range. A stop is made in the small town of Midelt for lunch. Continuing on you cross the Ziz River, passing rows of sky-scraping palm trees and fortified villages before reaching the *kasbah*-style hotel outside of Erfoud late in the day. Originally an oasis fort built by the French, Erfoud is now a sizable city and the gateway to the Sahara.

Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Overnight: Le Palais du Désert Hotel (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, MAY 20 ERFOUD/RISSANI/MERZOUGA

This morning visit the city of Rissani on the edge of the Sahara and formerly the last

staging post on the southern caravan route. Once the seat of the Alawait dynasty, Rissani boasts some striking architecture with its 18th-century ksar, a virtually impenetrable warren of alleys.

Enjoy a tour highlight this afternoon as you set out on a sunset excursion to the breathtakingly beautiful sand dunes at Merzouga on the edge of the Sahara. In the enormous silence watch the sun set over the desert as you take a camel ride along the *erg*, Morocco's only Saharan dunes.

Following this experience return to the hotel, and dine together tonight.

Overnight: Le Palais du Désert Hotel (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, MAY 21 ERFOUD/TINEHIR/TODRA GORGES/OUARZAZATE

Depart Erfoud this morning bound for Ouarzazate in the snow-topped High Atlas Mountains, passing one scene of natural beauty after another. The first stop is in Tinehir, a stunning mountain oasis rising on a series of lush riverside produce gardens accented by palm trees and dominated by ornate clay villages. Here visit 984-foot Todra Gorge, home to a variety of rare plant and bird species.

After enjoying lunch here, continue on to El Kelaa Mgouna, Morocco's "rose capital," before beginning the journey along the "Route of a Thousand Kasbahs," a region of fortresses with elaborately decorated façades.

Arrive in Ouarzazate late this afternoon; dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Overnight: Le Berbère Palace (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, MAY 22 OUARZAZATE/AIT BEN HADDOU/ MARRAKECH

Travel to Marrakech today, stopping en route at Ait ben-Haddou, one of southern Morocco's most recognizable villages since it is often used as a location for fashion and film shoots (including *Gladiator*). A UNESCO World

Heritage site, the village's old section consists of deep red *kasbahs* so tightly packed together they appear as a single building. The fragility of the buildings – and their state of conservation – means that a stop outside the city itself may take place depending on conditions at this UNESCO site.

Then descend from the High Atlas mountains, passing through typical villages whose stone houses have earthen roofs. In Tizi N'Tichka, traverse the Pass of the Pastures (alt. 7,415 feet), where life is much as it was centuries ago: shepherds bring their flocks to the high pastures every summer, then return with them to their villages in autumn.

Late this afternoon arrive in fabled Marrakech, an ancient intersection of Berber, African, Mediterranean, and Asian cultural and artistic influences. Considered Morocco's most cosmopolitan city – and some would say it's most beautiful – Marrakech boasts a spectacular location surrounded by rich farmlands and high mountains.

Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Overnight: Sofitel Marrakech (B, L, D)

MONDAY, MAY 23 MARRAKECH

Although its origins are disputed, it is believed Marrakech was settled in the early 11th century; five centuries later it was one of Morocco's dominant centers of art and culture. Today Marrakech is the nation's fourth largest city, with an exciting blend of modern architecture and an ancient walled *medina*. The full-day tour will concentrate on Old Marrakech, taking in the Koutoubia Mosque with its 282-foot minaret, an architectural highlight visible from miles away; the relatively contemporary (19th-century) El Bahia Palace with its Andalusian influence and fascinating harem quarter; and the ruins of 360-room Palais El Badii, built in 1578 in the style of Granada's Alhambra and lavishly decorated with Italian marble and gold. The palace, which took 25 years to construct, was then "looted" by Moulay Ismail to use in *his* palace.

Return to the hotel for lunch then set out to explore the city's *souks*, including those of yarn dyers, wrought iron and lantern makers,

herbalists, and wood carvers and painters. Next venture to Djemaa El Fna, the heart of Marrakech where your fantasies of Morocco will come to life. Here are snake charmers, storytellers, acrobats, and musicians asking a few *dirhams* to enlighten, fascinate, and entertain you. It's a circus atmosphere that has existed since the city's earliest days, serving as a *mecca* for both locals and tourists who come here for food, for fun, or to find a brief respite from daily life.

Dinner is on your own in this exotic city.

Overnight: Sofitel Marrakech (B, L)

TUESDAY, MAY 24 MARRAKECH

Today's excursion begins via horse-drawn carriage from Menara to the lush Majorelle Gardens, a botanical garden in the heart of the city. French artist Jaques Majorelle created this masterpiece, known for its cobalt blue accents, in 1924 during Morocco's colonial period as a protectorate of France. Here you are likely to see many of the 15 species of birds native to North Africa. Following a tour of the gardens, you'll visit the newly renovated Berber Museum, located on the grounds of Majorelle Gardens.

The afternoon is at leisure before dinner tonight at a local restaurant in the city's Old Town.

Overnight: Sofitel Marrakech (B, D)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25 MARRAKECH/CASABLANCA

Depart Marrakech this morning for the 3½-hour motorcoach ride to Casablanca, Morocco's largest and most sophisticated city, combining French and Moroccan influences. On this afternoon's tour you'll visit the Grand Mosque of Hassan II, the world's second largest Islamic house of worship, with a 656-foot minaret and a prayer hall three times the size of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. A stunning architectural achievement, the mosque boasts an equally stunning setting on the banks of the Atlantic shoreline. It is also Morocco's only functioning mosque that is open to non-Muslims and your tour affords us the opportunity to see the

palatial interior with its polished marble floor, Venetian chandeliers, and Moorish arches with 70 cedar-paneled cupolas.

Other highlights of your Casablanca tour include a visit to the harbor area and central market where vendors sell items such as spices, meats, fish, and flowers; the Habous Quarter (“New Medina”), designed by French architects in the 1930s to resolve a major housing crisis; and the Royal Palace.

Tonight gather for a farewell dinner to celebrate your discovery of Morocco.

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Casablanca (B, D)

THURSDAY, MAY 26

DEPART FOR U.S.

This morning transfer to the Casablanca airport for your flights to the U.S.

Meals: (B)