This land of dramatic contrasts invites you to encounter its ancient ruins and sacred mosques, endless desert and storied mountains, imposing kasbahs and spirited souks. As you 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 genuinely hospitable people.

GROUP SIZE: 12 to 24 guests

PRICING:
Per person double occupancy:

- $6,479 Air inclusive from Boston, New York, Washington D.C. (including airline taxes and fees)
- $5,695 Land only
- $1,495 Single supplement


Named the national Phi Beta Kappa/Frank M. Updike Memorial Scholar for 2010-2011, Shelemay’s article “The Power of Silent Voices, Women in the Syrian Jewish Musical Tradition” won the Society for Ethnomusicology’s 2010 Jaap Kunst Prize as best article of the year. A past-president of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Shelemay has been elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy for Jewish Research, the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.
SCHEDULE BY DAY
B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

FRIDAY, MAY 8
DEPART U.S. FOR MOROCCO
This evening, depart the U.S. for Morocco with a connecting flight to Casablanca.

SATURDAY, MAY 9
ARRIVE CASABLANCA / RABAT
Arrive this afternoon in Casablanca, Morocco’s chief port, economic capital, and largest city. After clearing customs and picking up your luggage, proceed to the airport meeting point where you will be greeted by a tour representative.

After a one-hour transfer to Rabat, check in at your hotel near famed Hassan Tower. You have a short time to rest and refresh before meeting your fellow travelers at a welcome briefing and enjoying dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: La Tour Hassan (D)

SUNDAY, MAY 10
RABAT
Spend today touring this unique city, starting inside the vast square of Dar al-Makhzen, the primary home of Mohamed VI, the king of Morocco. Next, visit the Roman site of Chellah, and see the remnants of Sala Colonia, a port that was abandoned in 1154. The gardens, pavilions, and ruins here are spread out over multiple levels, and now house a number of curious cats and majestic storks. Continuing your tour of the city, visit the Museum of Moroccan History and Civilization and Rabat’s impressive new Mohammed VI Modern and Contemporary Art Museum before crossing the river to Sale, where you enjoy lunch in a private home.

After lunch, admire the stunning architecture of the Mausoleum of Mohamed V, built for the grandfather of the current king. The tilework and attention to detail of the building are extremely impressive, as is the setting: standing across a wide plaza from the 12th-century Hassan Tower. From here, visit the fortified Kasbah des Oudaïas, which calls to mind Santorini with its signature blue and white buildings lining narrow streets, beautiful Andalusian Gardens, and a wide plaza overlooking the mouth of the Bou Regreg River.

Finish the day with a short walk through the medina, or old city, the first of many you will encounter on this tour. Late afternoon, return to the hotel before enjoying dinner together at Dinarjat, an acclaimed restaurant in Rabat’s Old Town serving traditional Moroccan fare.

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

MONDAY, MAY 11
RABAT / MEKNES / VOLUBILIS / FEZ
This morning depart by motor coach for Meknes, Morocco’s youngest Imperial City and also a UNESCO World Heritage site. See the impressive Bab el Mansour gateway and visit the ruins of the imperial granaries and stables.

Then, 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, and the hilltop setting is a photographer’s delight, with freestanding columns and archways framing lovely views across the Moroccan countryside. While learning the history from a local guide, you have ample time at this UNESCO World Heritage Site to explore and take photos. After lunch in a local restaurant, continue on to Fez, arriving late this afternoon.

Tonight enjoy a traditional Moroccan dinner together at your hotel perched on a hill overlooking the Fez medina.

Overnight: Hotel Sahrai (B, L, D)
TUESDAY, MAY 12
FEZ

Known as the “Athens of Africa” for its wealth of cultural, educational, and religious institutions, Fez is the country’s oldest imperial capital, and perhaps its most fascinating. Explore the city on a full day tour, beginning a comfortable walk in the medina this morning. Continue on to visit the quarter where Fez’s renowned pottery and ceramics makers create the complex blue-and-white geometric patterns of traditional “bleu de Fez” household and decorative objects.

After lunch together in the medina, tour the old Mellah (Jewish quarter) and its 17th-century synagogue and the royal gates. After your touring, dine tonight in the hotel’s international restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel Sahrai (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, MAY 15
ERFOUD / RISSANI / MERZOUGA

This morning visit the city of Rissani, sitting on the edge of the Sahara and formerly the last staging post on the southern caravan route. Traders would stop here before embarking on the journey across the Sahara to sub-Saharan Africa and across to the Levant. Once the seat of the Alawite dynasty, Rissani boasts some striking architecture with its 18th-century ksar, a virtually impenetrable warren of alleys. After touring here, enjoy lunch and then set out in a caravan of 4x4s for the breathtakingly beautiful dunes of Merzouga, one of Morocco’s only Saharan dunes. Late this afternoon where, in the enormous silence, you watch the sun set over the desert as you take a camel ride along the erg. Following this experience, enjoy dinner together in this desert setting before returning to the hotel tonight.

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

SATURDAY, MAY 16
ERFOUD / TINEHIR / TODRA GORGE / OUARZAZATE

With a fairly long travel day ahead, leave Erfoud this morning bound for Ouarzazate in the snow-topped High Atlas Mountains, passing one scene of natural beauty after another. First pass through 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 you visit 984-foot Todra Gorge, a spectacular natural chasm with sheer rock faces rising on either side, which is home to a variety of rare plant and bird species. Briefly disembark to explore the river cutting through the bottom of the gorge, and look for climbers scaling the walls on either side. After enjoying lunch at a local restaurant, continue on to El Kelaa des Mgouna, Morocco’s “rose capital,” before beginning your journey along the “Route of a Thousand Kasbahs,” a region of fortresses with elaborately decorated façades. Arrive in Ouarzazate (the “door of the desert”) late this afternoon; dinner tonight is at the hotel.

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

SUNDAY, MAY 17
OUARZAZATE / AIT BEN-HADDOU / MARRAKECH

Depart Ouarzazate for Marrakech today, stopping en route at uninhabited 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 the group may have to stop outside the city itself depending on conditions at this UNESCO site during the visit. Then as you descend from the High Atlas mountains, pass through typical villages with fortified walls and stone houses with 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.

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, Marrakech boasts a spectacular location surrounded by rich farmlands and high mountains. Dine tonight at the hotel.

Overnight: Sofitel Marrakech (B, L, D)

MONDAY, MAY 18
MARRAKECH

On your full-day tour of Marrakech today, concentrate on Old Marrakech, taking in the Koutoubia Mosque with its distinct 282-foot minaret; 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.

Return to the hotel for lunch then set out mid-afternoon 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. Here are snake charmers, storytellers, acrobats, and musicians asking only a few dirhams to enlighten, fascinate, and entertain. 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 19
MARRAKECH

On today’s excursion, travel via horse-drawn carriage from Menara to the Majorelle Gardens, a botanical garden in the heart of the city. Here you are likely to see many of the 15 species of birds native to North Africa. Following a tour of the gardens, visit the recently opened Yves St. Laurent Museum directly adjacent to Majorelle, where you have time to wander through and learn about the famed French designer and his deep connection to Morocco.

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 20
MARRAKECH / CASABLANCA

Depart Marrakech this morning for the 3½-hour motor coach ride to storied Casablanca, Morocco’s largest and most sophisticated city, combining French and Moroccan influences. On this afternoon’s tour, 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. It is also Morocco’s only functioning mosque that is open to non-Muslims and this tour affords you the opportunity to see the palatial interior with its polished marble floor, Venetian chandeliers, and Moorish arches with 70 cedar-paneled cupolas. You also may have time to visit other highlights of Casablanca, including Notre Dame de Lourdes, a Catholic Church boasting impressive stained glass.

Tonight gather for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant to celebrate your Moroccan adventure.

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Casablanca (B, D)

THURSDAY, MAY 21
DEPART FOR U.S.

After breakfast this morning transfer to the Casablanca airport for your return flight to the U.S. (B)