



HARVARD

Alumni Association

MOROCCAN DISCOVERY

MAY 8–21, 2020

Morocco offers friendly and outgoing people, rich cultures, dramatic beauty, and ecological diversity. From its snowy Atlas peaks to the undulating dunes of the Sahara, Morocco delivers startling contrast and striking images around every turn.

Encounter ancient ruins and sacred mosques, endless desert and storied mountains, and imposing *kasbahs* and spirited *souks*.

As you travel from the imperial cities of Rabat, Fez, and Marrakech to the High Atlas and vast Sahara, experience Morocco's colorful mix of Berber, Arab, African, Jewish, and European influences, which have created a unique pulse of life.

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

STUDY LEADER: KAY SHELEMAY is the G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Before moving to Harvard in 1992, she taught at Columbia University, New York University, and Wesleyan University. She has published numerous books and articles as well as recordings and a museum catalogue. 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

In the 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 Oudaias, 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.

Enjoy 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

In the morning, depart by motor coach for Meknes, Morocco's youngest Imperial City and a UNESCO World Heritage site. See the impressive Bab el Mansour gateway and visit the ruins of the imperial granaries and stables.

Continue 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.

In the evening 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 to 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)*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

FEZ

Begin today with a visit to the Museum of Fez, before return to the labyrinthine medina, focusing on the artisans’ quarters, the 14th-century Koranic schools, and Al Karaouine, the medieval theological university that was founded in 859 CE, which allows it to claim a host of superlatives: world’s oldest continually operating university, world’s first degree-awarding educational institution, and oldest school founded by a woman (Fatima al-Fihri).

The remainder of the afternoon is free for lunch on your own and for independent exploration or relaxation.

In the evening, enjoy a private dinner at an intimate family-run riad in Fez.

Overnight: *Hotel Sahrai (B, D)*

THURSDAY, MAY 14

FEZ / MIDELT / ERFOUD

Today’s transfer from Fez to Erfoud in the Sahara desert is long, but your reward is the breadth and beauty of the passing scenery.

Traveling inland, cross the fertile plains beyond Fez and continue through the Middle Atlas mountain range and its cedar forests, where you may see the local Barbary apes in their natural habitat. Cross the Ziz River, passing rows of sky-scraping palm trees and fortified villages before reaching your *kasbah*-style hotel on the outskirts of Erfoud late in the day. Built by the French as an oasis fort, 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 15

ERFOUD / RISSANI / MERZOUGA

In the 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 Alawait dynasty, Rissani boasts some striking architecture with its 18th-century *ksar*, a virtually impenetrable warren of alleys.

After lunch, set out in a caravan of 4x4s for the breathtakingly beautiful dunes of Merzouga, one of the highlights of our tour. Reach 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 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 lunch at a local restaurant, continue 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.

Later 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 that are 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)