



AMC
ADVENTURE
TRAVEL

VOLUNTEER-LED EXCURSIONS WORLDWIDE

March 10- 20, 2018



Trekking in Morocco

Between the Sahara Desert and the Atlas Mountains

Leader: Dick Cable Trip #1803 Co-Leader: Joe Thomas

A melting pot of Arabic, Jewish, Berber and European cultures, Morocco has many layers to explore. Its long history has seen Roman invasions, Islamic conquests and European colonization, all of which have left their mark on its food, architecture and traditions.

Wandering the labyrinthine souqs of Marrakesh or Fez, your senses are awakened by the sound of tradespeople at work, the aroma of orange blossom and the kaleidoscope of rugs, scarves and babouche shoes enticing passers-by. The Atlas Mountains, dotted with tiny villages, make way for arid desert where nomads still eke out a living. Out towards the coast, olive groves and argan trees grow freely across the hills.

Come join us as we explore and experience the wonders of Morocco.



OUR ITINERARY

Wild and remote, the Jebel Saghro is an isolated mountain massif located in the south of Morocco, between the High Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert. Famed for its harsh, lunar-esque landscapes, this is quintessential Nomad country, a mineral world of volcanic rock and basaltic peaks, of sparsely vegetated plateaus interspersed with isolated mountain springs and canyon oases.



This guided walking itinerary will see you spend 4 days in the region of Jebel Saghro, as you explore the volcanic massif at length accompanied by an experienced guiding team. The itinerary has been extended to include time in Fez and Marrakech, as well as an overnight nomadic camping adventure in the Sahara Desert.

Day 1: Leave US

Day 2: Arrive Marrakech

Arrive Marrakech (probably after connecting through Casablanca). On arrival in Marrakech, you will be met by your private driver and guide and transferred to a Riad – a traditional Moroccan townhouse with inner garden and courtyard – in the centre of town (choice of Riad tbc).

Evening at leisure. Depending on the time of your arrival, it may be possible to arrange for a guided tour of Marrakech's lively night market this evening. (A day tour of Marrakech's historic attractions will take place on the morrow.)

Day 3: Marrakech

After breakfast at the Riad, embark on a tour of Marrakech's most famous landmarks, including the Saadian Tombs, Bahia Palace, the medina "Souks" and, of course, the famous Jemaa-el-Fnaa Square. Lunch will be at a restaurant in the medina. We then continue to the Majorelle Gardens, before returning to your Riad early this evening.

Day 4: Ouarzazate and Roses Valley

Depart Marrakech this morning and drive approx. 5 hours south-east via Ouarzazate ("the door to the desert") to reach Kalaa M'Gouna, a quiet town famous for its roses (celebrated each year at the beginning of May in the Roses Festival, which sees floral displays and a traditional market of roses in town).

There will be time to explore Kalaa M'Gouna before continuing on to Tagounite, a small village situated on the edge of the desert, where you pass the night in a traditional homestay.

Day 5: Trekking in Nomad Country

Today will mark the beginning of your trekking journey. Accompanied by mules and an experienced guiding team, you'll journey for five hours on a little-trodden trail that will take you from the clay and mud-brick farmers' homes and kasbahs on the edge of Tagounite, through date plantations, palmeries and wild juniper forest, to the barren foothills of the lower Atlas Mountains. The walk is on mostly flat terrain, though ending with a steady climb to the oasis of Almoun'n Ouarg (2,300m), where a camp will be set up near the spring.

The Atlas Mountains extend some 2,500km across northwestern Africa, spanning Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, separating the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastline from the Sahara Desert. Actually a series of ranges with diverse terrain, climates and wildlife, the Atlas are dotted with Berber villages and riven with canyons and ravines. The highest peak is 4,167m Toubkal, which lies within Morocco's Toubkal National Park.

Note: the nights can often be cold in the mountains.

Day 6: Saghro volcanic massif

Descend to the Igli Oasis, a famous scenic spot with fabulous views of the entire Saghro volcanic massif, and beyond it the Draa and Dades Valleys. With its volcanic monoliths, sparsely vegetated plateaus, isolated springs and canyon oases, the landscape in this region is perhaps more reminiscent of the American South-West than the desert landscapes one might associate with Morocco.

Today will be a leisurely hike of approx. 5 hours, with lots of time to take in the views. In the evening, set up camp on the Tadaoute N'Tiblahe Plateau.

Day 7: Visit Nkob Nomad Market; Desert Camping

After breakfast at camp, trek to Nkob, a traditional nomad market. There will be time to explore the market this morning, before meeting with your driver and minibus for the driven transfer to the famous Tazzarine palm groves, where you'll meet with the Touareg nomads.

This afternoon, join a nomadic camel caravan and trek for approx. 3 hours to reach the sand dunes of Foug Tizza, where you pitch camp for a night under the stars.



Day 8: Errachidia

An early start, as you walk through the desert to the village of Targhbalt, where you'll meet with your driver for the driven transfer to Errachidia, a small city on the northern edge of the Sahara Desert.

On arrival in Errachidia, check into the Auberge Tinit for one night.

Day 9: Fes

From Errachidia, continue north through the Middle Atlas Mountains to Fes, with fabulous scenery to be enjoyed en route. There will be time to stop along the way at the high altitude towns of Midelt and Ifrane – the latter an Alpine-style resort built by the French in the 1930s, famous for its snow and its red-roofed homes – and to take in the fabulous views of the High Atlas Mountains at the many viewpoints you pass during the journey.



On arrival in Fes, check into a Riad in the medina (choice of Riad tbc).

Day 10: Fes

Embark on a whip around tour of Fes accompanied by a local guide. You'll explore the city's iconic mausoleums, mosques and medinas in the morning, while in the afternoon, you'll have time to get lost in Fes el-Bali, the world's largest car-free urban area, where you can explore 9,000 narrow cobbled streets lined with spices, food stalls and tanneries.



Overnight in Fes.

Day 11: Departure

At leisure until your scheduled transfer to the airport for your homeward flight. (Flights will depart from Fes and may have to route through Casablanca).





Leaders:

Dick Cable has been an AMC-AT leader for 7 years and has lead or co-led hiking and biking trips to Yosemite National Park, Mongolia, Sicily, Spain, Italy, France, Nepal, Patagonia, Finland and Tanzania He is an education programming specialist and teaches spinning and group exercise classes.

Joe Thomas has an avid interest in health and fitness which has paved the way to adventure travel. He has participated in bike trips through the Po Valley of Italy and the Camino de Santiago in Spain. He has co-led trips to Machu Picchu/ Easter Island, Puglia, Italy, Patagonia, Dolomites and Tanzania.

Both leaders have a strong interest in sharing the allure of adventure excursions to the most beautiful and intriguing places on earth. Both are CPR and Wilderness First Aid certified.

Disclosures

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a nonprofit basis. Leaders are not compensated except for their travel and administrative costs associated with the trip. A program fee is assessed toward AMC Adventure Travel Excursion program and administrative expenses.

TRIP COST:

**Total Trip Cost \$2550:
\$900 due with application;
\$900 due September 1, 2017
and \$750 due January 1, 2018**

TRIP INCLUDES:

**9 nights lodging with all meals;
English speaking guide
all activities and tours;
Travel insurance**

TRIP DOES NOT INCLUDE:

Airfare of approximately \$1000:

OUR GOALS

As leaders, our goals for the group are to have fun, utilize your skills, and savor a foreign culture at reasonable cost and in the company of other adventurers with similar interests. We encourage your individual contributions, cooperation and good humor to enrich the group's experience. We anticipate each participant's engagement as part of a group, and expect each to abide by the leaders' decisions and work towards the group having a good time. Be prepared to help your fellow riders and spend time with other participants on the trip. In doing so, you will help ensure each participant's maximum experience and enjoyment of the trip.

For additional information, contact Dick at r.cable@sbcglobal.net or Joe at 203-755-5141 or thomasj73@sbcglobal.net.