

ACACIA AFRICA

SOUTHERN MOROCCO MAGIC – TOUR DOSSIER

TOUR CODE SMM8

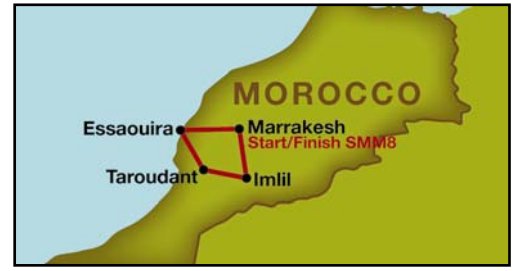
MARRAKESH - MARRAKESH

8 DAYS

Tour Starts – **Day 1 is arrival day. Check the joining hotel reception for time of introductory meeting.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marrakesh
- High Atlas Mountains
- Aremd Village
- Tizi n'Test
- Taroudant
- Essaouira
- Marrakesh



Take in the spectacular vistas in the High Atlas, stay in a mountain gite, explore the walled city of Taroudant, enjoy the chilled out markets and breezy cafes of Essaouira and be intoxicated by the heady, exotic sights and smells of Marrakesh on this 8-day tour of south-west Morocco.

INTENDED ITINERARY

Whilst it is our intention to adhere to the route described below, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the tour and on occasion it may be necessary or desirable to make alterations to the published itinerary. Please therefore, treat the following as a guide only. **This tour is operated in association with a local operator. Acacia is proud to be working with local companies supporting local communities.**

Duration: 8 Days
Countries visited: Morocco

DAY 1 Marrakesh Local riad

Today is a free day for your arrival in Marrakesh. Check-in is usually available from approximately 14:00 onwards. This evening your guide will meet you in the hotel for a brief introduction meeting, to collect local payment and to give you information about the week ahead. A message will be left in reception as to when this meeting is taking place. Please ask the receptionist if you have not been given the message on arrival.

If you arrive early in the day you can spend some time exploring Marrakesh. Our riad is very close to the central square of Djemma el Fna, a great place to take a walk to drink in some of the old city and observe the snake charmers, dentists, fruit sellers and gnoua musicians who entertain and ply their wares to the crowds that pass everyday. Going further afield you may like to take a taxi to the Marjorelle Gardens, a beautiful walled garden once belonging to Yves Saint Laurent, perfect for a relaxing introduction to Marrakesh's style and history.

DAY 2 High Atlas Mountains, Imlil, Aremd, Bx1 Mountain gite

Today we set off at 08:30 and head south into the High Atlas Mountains weaving through remote mountain villages towards the mountain town of Imlil near the foot of Mount Toubkal. At 4167m Mount Toubkal is the

highest peak in the Atlas, a range that runs from the Atlantic in Morocco across to Tunisia on the Mediterranean. Arriving in Imlil we leave our transport and take a scenic hike up to the local village of Aremd, enjoying spectacular views along the way. Tonight we stay in a mountain gite (local guesthouse) with panoramic views of the surrounding lofty peaks and the sweeping valley below. The gite has shared rooms and bathroom, run by a Berber family from the village.

DAY 3 - 4
Tizi n'Test, Taroudant, Essaouira
Bx1
Local hotel

This morning we descend and return to Imlil to continue our journey over the mountains. After passing through the town of Asni and its newly formed dam, we take the famous Tizi-n'Test mountain pass, known for its dramatic vistas and proximity to Mt. Toubkal. Later this afternoon we arrive at our hotel in Taroudant. Taroudant, a no-frills kind of town, but extremely down to earth and friendly, is sometimes called the 'grandmother of Marrakesh' sharing similar high red walls and pre-cursing Marrakesh as a base for Almoravid leaders in the 11th century. Within the walls, the inhabitant Berber population live in houses which have often been home to their family for generations, making the town a typical place to catch examples of ordinary mountain Berber life. On arrival there may be the chance for you to hire bikes and explore the area on wheels, depending on time. We stay tonight in a small hotel within the walls of the city.

The following morning we take a tour around Taroudant to explore the town and local markets and maybe sample some of the local produce. After lunch we drive towards the coast and follow the 'hippy trail' past remote surf beaches on the Atlantic Ocean to the popular fishing port of Essaouira. Tonight why not sample some of the wonderful seafood on offer in many of Essaouira's local restaurants.

DAY 5
Essaouira
Bx1
Local hotel

Today is a free day for your own exploration. Essaouira's medina, with its white washed walls and laid back charm is a great place to get lost for the day. The town has always been an attraction to artists (Jimi Hendrix hung out here in the 60s and 70s) and wandering the medina's laneways you will find art shops selling local art and street musicians playing the traditional music.

In the mornings fresh fish is brought on the fishing boats and the harbour is a hive of activity as local restaurant and shops haggle for the catch of the day. At lunchtime why not enjoy some of the fresh seafood from the barbeque stands that line the port. The souks are great places to pick up souvenirs, with shop sellers here less intense than on some of the large cities. Even if you don't want to buy, they are a riot of colour and smells, guaranteed to enthral.

On Essaouira's long breezy beach - great for a sea stroll - locals play football and ride camels. The more sporty play with the surf, wind surfing or kite surfing in the wide bay, also available for hire or lessons, weather and availability permitting. But if you would rather relax, why not stop at one of the medinas street cafes and sample some of the local pastries and coffee while watching the world go by. In the late afternoon, head to a restaurant by the ramparts and watch the sun set out to sea, before the evening comes alive, with a handful of restaurants and bars playing live Andalucian and Gnaoua music into the night.

DAY 6
Essaouira to Marrakesh
Bx1
Local riad

After breakfast, we leave picturesque Essaouira, and drive back towards Marrakesh through a unique area where special Argan trees grow. We stop en route to take a closer look at these trees and sample locally produced Argan oil at a women's co-operative. On arrival in Marrakesh we say goodbye to our crew and check back into our Marrakesh riad. This afternoon you might like to take an optional city walk with a local guide, to find out more about the city and its historic buildings. This evening why not enjoy dinner at one of the many barbeque stands in the main square, open every night of the year – always a heady mix of smells, noise and delicious barbeques, salads and broths – served by local berber families.

DAY 7
Marrakesh
Bx1
Local riad

The following day is free for your own site-seeing in Marrakesh. The city is divided into two distinct parts, the Gueliz or modern French-built city, and the old city or Medina. Worth visiting is the Koutoubia Mosque and tower (exterior only - no entry to non-muslims), Saadian tombs, Ben Youssef Medersa, the Dar Si Said Palace (now the Museum of Moroccan Art) and the Menara or Marjorelle Gardens. Alternatively take an open topped bus or a caleche (horse and cart) ride through the streets of the city. And for last minute bargains, dive into the famous Marrakesh souks and barter for souvenirs of your Moroccan adventure.

A 'must-do' at the end of the day in Marrakesh is to be down in the main square Djemma el Fna for sunset. Find a place early, on the roof terraces of a café overlooking the square and sip mint tea or the local coffee ('nusus') as the sunset turns the city's walls deep pink, the square below come to life with food stands and street entertainers and the call to prayer rings out over the rooftops of this beautiful city.

DAY 8
Marrakesh
Bx1

On day 8 you are free to leave at any time. Your hotel can help arrange a taxi to the airport. Check out is midday but bags can be left in storage if you wish to enjoy the city and you have a later flight.

TOUR INFORMATION

A great tour of the High and Anti Atlas mountains, with opportunities to meet and experience traditional mountain culture and do some low impact treks, combined with free time in Essaouira and Marrakesh.

TOUR STYLE

Adventure tour

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Tour highlights, transport, accommodation, meals as indicated, services of a tour guide & driver

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Visas, travel insurance, flights, airport taxes and transfers, drinks, laundry, tips, sleeping bag in the mountain, optional activities & items of a personal nature.

ACCOMMODATION

Moderate hotels/guest houses/riads – twin rooms with en suite facilities (6 nts.) mountain gite with shared rooms and bathroom (1 nt.)

TRANSPORT

Minibus

RAMADAN

Every year some of our tours in Morocco will fall over the Muslim festival of Ramadan. In 2009, Ramadan starts on 22nd August and lasts for one month. Some businesses may close during daylight hours, but this does not generally affect businesses catering to tourists or to tourist sites. However, please be aware that we may have to amend our itineraries slightly to accommodate different opening hours during this time.

OPERATOR

As this tour is run by a respected local tour operator, you will benefit from their extensive local knowledge and enthusiasm as well as helping Acacia support local businesses in Africa.

TOUR PREPARATION

BOOKING INFORMATION

When you make a confirmed booking for your tour you will be sent pre-departure information and related documents. Once you have paid in full you will receive a Travel Voucher giving full details of your joining point. Marrakesh is well served by a variety of airlines. Your travel agent can advise on flights to and from the start and finish of your tour.

JOINING INFORMATION

Meeting point in **Marrakesh**:

Address:

Riad Omar
22 Rue Bab Agnaou
Medina
Marrakesh 40008
Tel. +212 24 44 56 60

Contact details:

Tour start time:

Day 1 is arrival day

Tour end point in **Marrakesh**:

As above

Tour end time:

After breakfast on Day 8

EXTENDING YOUR STAY

Any additional nights accommodation in Marrakesh can be booked on a direct pay basis. Please contact Acacia to check current prices.

WHAT TO BRING

Please try to keep your luggage to a minimum, bearing in mind that most airlines impose a 20kg luggage limit. A large soft holdall or backpack and a smaller day pack is ideal. On this tour you should bring a mixture of lightweight, cool clothing for the day and warm clothing (ie. fleece, long trousers and hat) mornings and evenings. Please note that temperatures drop dramatically at night between October and March and cold weather clothes are required. Please bring a sleep sheet or sleeping bag (Oct – Mar) and a torch/flashlight (head-torch ideal) for the night in the mountain gite. A money belt/pouch, worn under the clothing is also a good idea. Please avoid bringing unnecessary valuables and use hotel safes wherever possible, to store your cash, passport and airline tickets.

VACCINATIONS/HEALTH

The table below indicates the vaccinations suggested for travel on this tour but **should be treated as a guide only**. You should seek professional medical advice from your GP or clinic at least six weeks prior to departure.

Country	Tetanus	Diphtheria	Polio	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Typhoid	Meningitis	Rabies	Yellow Fever	Malaria
Morocco	R	-	R	R	-	R	-	-	-	-

C = Compulsory, R = Recommended, * = If travelling from infected countries a certificate of proof may be required.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

The table below indicates the visas required for travel to the countries on this tour but **should be treated as a guide only**. At least one month prior to travel seek confirmation from embassies or a visa specialist, that these requirements are still current. For UK citizens the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) offers free up-to-date travel info: www.fco.gov.uk For other nationalities a number of travel advice websites are listed on the Acacia website.

Nationality	UK	AUS	NZ	USA	CAN	BEL	IRE	NED	DEN	ITA	GER	AUT	SWE	FIN	NOR	MEX	KOR
Morocco	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No

MONEY MATTERS

PERSONAL EXPENSES

Naturally you will require extra money for your own personal spending on the tour, for snacks, drinks, souvenirs, tips and items of a personal nature. Everybody has different spending habits but as a guideline we suggest you budget US\$10-20 per day. Also keep US\$ cash for relevant airport taxes and visas needed, optional activities and any additional accommodation before or after your tour.

- **Spending money** is best carried as cash in US dollars, Sterling or Euro which can then be transferred into the local currency where necessary.
- **Currency:** Moroccan Dirham (Dh)
- **ATM machines** are found in most main towns.
- **Credit cards** are useful for paying for more expensive souvenirs in Marrakesh but are not suitable elsewhere and charges for using them can be high by western standards.
- **Travellers cheques** can be difficult to cash but make suitable emergency funds.

It is recommended to bring your money in a mixture of ways and your guide can best advise on what to use where.

LOCAL PAYMENT

The Local Payment (LP) set out in the brochure is to be paid to the local tour guide on arrival in Marrakesh. It is used by the tour leader to pay for running costs and is not a tips kitty or personal pocket money for the guide. Travellers cheques and credit cards are not accepted.

TIPPING

As in many areas where tourism is an important contributor to the economy, it is customary in Morocco to give a small gratuity to local staff, including your guide and drivers, at the end of a tour, for services rendered. This is at your own discretion.

INSURANCE

It is a booking condition of Acacia that you have full travel insurance valid for the duration of your tour to cover you for medical emergency and repatriation to your home country. Your guide will ask you for a copy of this when you join the tour. It is also important that you leave a copy of your insurance with the person nominated as your emergency contact. We can recommend a respected, specialist travel insurance provider for this tour. Please contact Acacia for more information.

Country Information - MOROCCO

Facts

Capital:	Rabat
Size:	446 550 sq km
Population:	32 725 847 (Sept. 05)
Groups:	Arab-Berber, Jewish
Languages:	Arabic (official), Berber dialects, French
Local time:	GMT + 0
Seasons:	Cold (December – February), hot (June-August)
Currency:	1 Dirham = 100 Centimes
Telephone:	Country code 222 , international access code 00
Electricity:	127/220V / 50 Hz, two pin plug or round pin plug and receptacle with male grounding pin

Morocco conjures up romantic images of the rich culture and stunning landscapes and for good reason. Travellers will engage in the country's unique history, its bustling market places and its fantastic art and architecture. Morocco is the ideal African starting point for the traveller. It is easily accessible from Europe, the culture is markedly different but its people are friendly and welcoming. For some, the country's main appeal lies in the quality of its beaches. Morocco has always been a crossroads, the place where the East collides with the West, it also marks the merger of the Mediterranean with the Atlantic and this gives Morocco two strikingly different coasts. Morocco has a rich culture and civilization. Each region possesses its own specificities, contributing, thus, to the making of national culture and to the civilization legacy. Morocco is a fascinating mix of Islamic, Arab, African, and Berber cultures with a topping of France. Throw in some pleasant cities, eye-boggling landscapes, colourful people, excellent beaches, good trekking, plenty of interesting shopping and there's something for everyone.

Points of Interest

Marrakesh

During its almost 1000 years of existence, Marrakesh was Morocco's on-/off capital. Although not the capital today, Marrakesh is one of the cities every traveller visits.

Life in Marrakesh revolves around the **Djemma el Fna**, the city's central square. Although busy during the day, it really comes to life in the evenings when the nightly open-air food market is set up. Try the many different dishes offered at numerous food stalls, accompanied by some fresh fruit juice and round off your evening with a wander around, gawping at snake charmers and listening to story tellers.

At one end of the square lies the entrance to the bewildering labyrinth of alleyways that make up the **souqs**. Take a stroll between stalls offering tourist kitsch, but also goods for everyday life.

The **Koutoubia Mosque** was built in the 12th century and is one of the prime tourist attractions. It is situated nearby Djemma el Fna, just look out for the high minaret. When exploring the medina by foot, you will invariably come across the **city wall** which surrounds the old city. If you happen to be there in winter, pay attention to the many nests on top of the wall – they are from storks escaping the harsh European winter. One of the most memorable experiences is to find a hotel or restaurant with a rooftop terrace from where you can enjoy the view over the nearby snow-capped **Atlas Mountains**. If you are interested in Moroccan art, head to the **Dar si Said Museum**.

High Atlas Mountains

The highest mountain range in Northern Africa is only a stone's throw away from Marrakesh. It not only makes for a nice backdrop there, but is also an excellent place for **hiking**. To climb the highest peak, **Jebel Toubkal** (4167 metres), you don't need any technical hiking knowledge, but be in a generally fit physical condition. Stop in one of the many small villages that map the ascent.

Essaouira

This friendly, relaxed seaside town at the Atlantic was founded in the 16th century by the Portuguese. A trading and fishing centre with colourful markets, its special light and Atlantic surf made it prominent with artists and surfers in modern times. See what is on offer in the numerous **galleries** (specialized in woodcarving) or opt for a horse/camel ride along the **beach**. There you will come across **castle ruins** which allegedly inspired Jimi Hendrix' song "Castle in the sand". Essaouira offers countless nice street cafès to kick back and soak in the special atmosphere this place has to offer.

Useful Arabic Words

Hello	Marhaba
Goodbye	Ma'a salaameh
My name is...	Ismee
What is your name?	Ismetek?
Thank you	Shukran
You're welcome	La shukran ala wajib
Please	Afek
Excuse me	'An iznak (male) /'An iznek (female)
What time is it?	Wash el sa'aa?
How much does this cost?	Bikaam da?
One	Waahid
Two	Jooj
Three	Talaata
Four	Arba'a
Five	Khamsa
Six	Sitteh
Seven	Sab'a
Eight	Tamanya
Nine	Tis'a
Ten	'Ashra
Where is the restroom?	Fein el hamaam?
Left	Yassar
Right	Yimeen

NB. Please note that Arabic has many colloquial dialects and changes from country to country.

ACACIA ON THE ROAD – NEWS & EVENTS



RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

We believe that you get the most out of a journey by respecting the culture and people of the places you visit. On our tours we try to travel in a way that benefits the communities we pass through and minimises negative impact on the environment. This can be from ensuring the campsites we use are clean when we leave and dressing respectfully in conservative areas to getting involved with local charity projects. We ask that you are open to this when you travel with us. Being proactive in responsible travel helps develop cross-cultural understanding and friendships with the local people, and will greatly enhance your experience in Africa.

PHOTOS & STORIES SEARCH

If you've ever thought you can take better pictures than the brochures or have a great travel story and want to see yourself in print, then we're looking for you. If you've captured a great moment on tour, whether it's of the wildlife, local people, landscape or life on the road why not enter our monthly photographic competition starting in 2009. Not only do we give away a monthly prize, you may also see your photos published in a future brochure or on our website. We are also on the lookout for stories of life on the road, the funny, exhilarating, moving or simply unforgettable things you did on tour. We publish the best stories on the Tales from the Road section of our website. Send your photos or stories to acaciaontheroad@googlemail.com

Photos should be in digital format & good resolution (max 6 pics per person) and labelled with the location of where the photos were taken. Meanwhile if you have a story or anecdote about your tour (up to 400 words) it needn't be word perfect, we'd love to hear about it.

Legalities: You, the photographer/author, retain copyright of all images & words submitted but we reserve the right to use of them for Acacia brochures, promotions & advertising.

For information on our Acacia Small Group Safaris, Adventure Tours, Comfort Class Safaris, Short Breaks & City Stays, Voluntours, Dive Tours, New Horizons and Access Tours or to contact us please visit www.acacia-africa.com

<p>Acacia Adventure Holidays Ltd 23A Craven Terrace London W2 3QH</p> <p>UK Tel. +44 (0)20 7706 4700 Fax. +44 (0)20 7706 4686 SA Tel. +27 (0)21 556 1157 Fax. +27 (0)21 557 5983</p> <p>Email: info@acacia-africa.com Website: www.acacia-africa.com</p>	 The logo for Acacia African Adventure features a stylized acacia tree in the center, with the words 'ACACIA AFRICAN ADVENTURE' written in a curved banner below it.	 The logo for ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) consists of a circular emblem with a stylized globe or grid pattern, and the letters 'ABTA' below it, with the full name 'Association of British Travel Agents' in smaller text underneath.	 The logo for the African Travel & Tourism Association (atta) features a silhouette of the African continent in the center, with the text 'african travel & tourism association' around the top and 'atta' in a stylized font below it. Below the continent, it says 'Incorporating the Indian Ocean Islands'.
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