



# Tour Information



## Gardens of Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains





## Travel

### Passports

You may need to renew your British Passport if you are travelling to an EU country. **Please ensure your passport is less than 10 years old (even if it has 3 months or more left on it) and has at least 3 months validity remaining from the date of travel.**

For more information, please visit: [passport checker](#)

### Visas

Visas are not required for British and EU nationals. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Embassy of Morocco: 49 Queen's Gate Gardens,  
Kensington, London SW7 5NE  
Tel: (0)20 7581 5001  
Email: [cg.london@maec.gov.ma](mailto:cg.london@maec.gov.ma)  
Website:  
<https://www.moroccanembassy london.org.uk>  
Open Mon-Fri 09:30-15:00



### Tickets

You will be sent an e-ticket which shows your **flight reference number** with your final departure documents. EasyJet have now replaced all of their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at an additional cost.

Online check-in is available any time prior to travel using the reference number provided.

For more information, please visit:

[www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



### Baggage allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

Your EasyJet ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus **one cabin bag that can fit under the seat in front of you (maximum size 45 x 36 x 20cm, including any handles or wheels).** If you book an upfront or extra legroom seat you can also take an additional large cabin bag on board.

<http://www.easyjet.com/en/planning/baggage>

### Transfers

On arrival at Menara Airport you will be met and transferred to the Opera Plaza Hotel (approx. 15-minute drive).

### Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

### Border Control

At border control you may need to show a return or onward ticket, show you have enough money for your stay and use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queuing.



## Accommodation

### Opera Grand Plaza Hotel

Centrally located, four-star boutique hotel with restaurant, bar, spa, hammam and swimming pool. Bedrooms have been individually designed in an Arab-Moorish style and are comfortable with all modern amenities including en-suite bathroom, air-conditioning, TV, telephone, and Wi-Fi.

For more information, please visit the hotel's website:

<https://www.grandplazamarrakech.com/en/>



## Food

Fusion isn't a new trend in Morocco, where the cuisine is a blend of Mediterranean, Arabic, Jewish, Persian, West African and Berber influences. Meals range from the *diffa*, an elaborate multicourse feast featuring couscous and grilled meats, to a quick kebab (*brochettes*) from a roadside stall. *Tagines*, the fragrant stews of meat, vegetables or fish, named after the distinctive conical earthenware vessel they're cooked in are the Moroccans main staple. Produce is seasonal, grown locally and typically without chemical pesticides or fertilisers. Many Moroccan restaurants now offer *à la carte* menus, a three-course fixed-price menu is still common at dinner. Restaurants in cities and large resorts are cosmopolitan, offering a good selection of cuisines, including typical Moroccan fare, plus French, Italian, Spanish and fusion dishes.

Specialities include: *Harira* (a spicy tomato-based soup). *Pastilla* (a pigeon-meat pie layered with flaky dough and dusted with cinnamon and sugar). *Couscous* (a savoury semolina dish cooked with local vegetables and/or meat). *Tajine* (a rich, fragrant stew, with some combination of lamb, chicken or fish with onions, olives, almonds, tomato, herbs or dried fruit). *Mechoui* (slow-roasted stuffed lamb or beef).



## Drink

Laws on alcohol are fairly liberal (for non-Muslim visitors) and bars in most tourist areas stay open late. Wines, beers and spirits are available to tourists. Muslims are forbidden to drink alcohol. By law, no-one is allowed to drink alcohol in view of a mosque or during Ramadan, although tourist establishments sometimes flout this rule. Locally produced wines, beers and mineral waters are reasonably priced, but imported drinks tend to be expensive.

Mint tea (aka 'Berber whiskey') is strong green 'gunpowder' tea mixed with fresh mint and heavily laced with sugar. Coffee is French *cafetière*, espresso or Turkish style. Bottled water is recommended and ensure that the seal is not broken

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

**Breakfast – daily**

**Lunch – days 2, 3 & 4**

**Dinner – days 1, 2, 4 & 6**



## Destination

Marrakech is the most famous city in Morocco and has a wealth of interest to the visitor. Most of the city architectural attractions are inside the Medina, the old walled section of the town. Built in the 12th century, the Koutoubia minaret is the most perfect Islamic religious structure in North Africa. This famous landmark dominates the local skyline and can easily be spotted from all of Marrakech. Other highlights include Saadian Tombs, hidden away behind high walls, the Mausoleum which displays a very high level of decoration using traditional stucco and delicate Granada-style carving, typical of classical Moroccan buildings. The Bahia Palace is a masterpiece of domestic architecture which gives a good idea of how the privileged lived in the 19th century in the Imperial city. The use of marble, stucco and mosaics predominates in the apartments, opening on to courtyards filled with fountains and plant life.

### Places of interest included in your tour:

#### Jardin Majorelle

Sheltered from the bustling city by high walls, The Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech took French painter Jacques Majorelle (1886-1962) forty years of passion and dedication to create this enchanting garden in the heart of the "Ochre City".

Complete with shady lanes, in the midst of trees and exotic plants, burbling streams and pools filled with water lilies and lotus flowers and filled with the chirping of numerous birds who come here to take refuge. The path through the gardens leads to a building with Moorish charm, with a hint of Art Deco, painted in astonishingly vibrant primary colours, glowing with an intense blue the artist perceived in the Atlas Mountains.

#### El Badi Palace

The El Badi palace (sometimes spelled El Badiï palace or El Badia, literally means "Palace of the incomparable") was built at the end of the sixteenth century. Former palace, it was built by the Saadian sultan Ahmed al-Mansur Dhahbi to celebrate the victory over the Portuguese army, in 1578, in the battle of the Three Kings. Today, there remains only a huge esplanade carved gardens, planted with orange trees and surrounded by high walls. Indeed, in 1696, the Alawite sultan Moulay Ismail took what was richest in this palace to build the imperial city

of Meknes. Since 2011, the El Badi Palace has been used as a stage for the Marrakech Laughter Festival, organized by Jamel Debbouze.

The building was erected on the northeastern corner of the Kasbah, not far from the private apartments of Saadian Sultan Ahmed al-Mansur Dhahbi. The construction of the palace took place from 1578 to 1594, some works remaining however until 1603. Symbol of power, the palatial ensemble expressed the splendor of the sovereign both with his subjects and foreign embassies: he was the setting for solemn audiences and parties. Considered a jewel of Islamic art, its construction was influenced by the Alhambra of Granada (Spain).

#### Menara Gardens

The name menara derives from the pavilion with its small green pyramid roof (menzeh), meaning lighthouse. Although there is no real lighthouse in the gardens, any building that is at a high altitude is locally known as menara, like the Menaret manaara mosque. The pavilion was built during the 16th century Saadi dynasty and renovated in 1869 by the Abderrahmane sultan of Morocco, who stayed here in the summer. The pavilion and the pond are surrounded by orchards and olive groves. The intention of the basin was to irrigate the surrounding gardens and orchards using a sophisticated system of underground canals called a qanat. The basin is supplied with water by an old hydraulic system that carries water from mountains located about 30 km from Marrakech.

#### Medina

The ancient streets, souks, businesses and homes of the Marrakech medina tell the story of a thousand years of urban development at the western edge of the Islamic world. In the busy main streets of the medina, your senses are sure to be bombarded, the fragrant scents, sounds and sights of Marrakech change with each new alley you explore. Think African spices, orange blossoms, gasoline, smoke and dust. Donkey carts, afternoon prayer and Moroccan instruments. Ultramarine blues, saffron oranges and intense jades, wherever you look. But wander deeper into the alleys, and you'll get an up-close view of how people in this city really live. In the narrowest, quietest alleys of the medina, don't be surprised to find a lemon garden or an extravagant Moroccan courtyard. The enclosed

courtyard—necessary in Marrakech because of Islamic notions of privacy and the realities of harsh desert climates—offer some of the most beautiful and surprising spaces in the medina.

### Arsat Moulay Abdesslam Garden

The original park was built in the eighteenth century for Prince **Moulay Abdessalam**. This garden - also known as Cyber Park - is located in the heart of Marrakech, a few hundred meters from the Djemaa El-Fna square. The garden benefits from an exceptionally large site, covering an area of eight hectares, and is largely open to the city. Its condition required an important process of rehabilitation and renovation. The rehabilitation process took place in 2003 with the support of Maroc Telecom, and the arsa was transformed into an electronic garden, on the initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Hasnaa. The doors of the garden were reopened in 2005, and it has become a place for hiking and strolling, but also a space for activating and discovering modern information technologies. The garden has been equipped with an electronic justice connected to the Internet, multimedia stations and an exhibition hall for the Museum of Communications.

### Ourika Valley, Atlas Mountains

The High Atlas is North Africa's mightiest mountain range but manages to maintain an air of intrigue and tradition along with its natural beauty. Forming a barrier between Morocco's northern plains and the Sahara, the region is home, as it has been for centuries, to the Berber people with traditional mud-thatched villages dotted throughout breathtaking and isolated mountain valleys. Despite it being so close to Marrakech, this beautiful lush green valley is definitely one of the best-preserved valleys in Morocco and is home to many Berber villagers, living a traditional lifestyle.

### Anima Garden

Nestled in the foothills of the spectacular High Atlas Mountains, Anima Garden is a space designed by multimedia artist André Heller. Surprising sculptures of magical characters are hidden amongst the shady pathways and flowerbeds filled with wildflowers, cacti, water features, palm trees and tall grass.

### Cactus Thiemann Garden

Cactus Thiemann is one of North Africa's largest cacti farms, with fields of giant aloe, agave and

prickly pear. The largest cactus, at 8m high, is 80 years old and was brought to Morocco overland from Europe in a souped-up military vehicle by founder Hans Thiemann. Tours of the 17-acre nursery and its 150 cacti varieties are fascinating.

Thiemann was an agricultural engineer and cacti lover who grew tired of growing in Germany's greenhouse conditions. His farm now operates as a garden and research facility and has provided expertly grown cacti to the botanical beds of famous gardens throughout Marrakech, including Jardin Majorelle.

### Secret Garden of Marrakech

Le Jardin Secret was in the 19th century one of the largest riads in the medina of Marrakech and belonged to the Chancellor of Sultan Moulay 'Abd-al-Hāfiz, who was the last sultan of Morocco before the French protectorate.

The riad includes two courtyards. The larger has been restored as an Islamic paradise garden, reflecting the pure geometry and Koranic symbolism of its progenitors. The smaller garden shows another view of paradise, as described in the Old Testament book of genesis, where "out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food."

### Aman Museum

The Museum of the Water Civilization in Morocco "Mohammed VI" in Marrakech is one of the most fascinating cultural sites in relation to water management in the creation of gardens in Morocco. Due to the richness of its architecture, its presentation and the message it conveys – Humans and water in Morocco, renewed genius and tradition – through installations, mock ups, new technology used, historic reconstruction and above all the unique atmosphere in which the visitor is immersed, the AMAN Museum will make you travel through the hydraulic adventure and its challenge in Morocco and will reveal all about the water management in Morocco and the Moroccan genius in the entrepreneurship of this wealth.

With a surface area of 2000 m<sup>2</sup> spread out on 3 levels, the permanent exhibition welcomes you to experience a journey through the hydraulic epic in Morocco. An exceptional scenography exposing objects, models, maps, interactive games with a spectacular 360° projection.

## Bio-Aromatic Garden of Ourika

The Jardin Bio-Aromatique de l'Ourika was created in 1998 by two brothers: Dr Jalil Belkamel and Dr Abdel Fattah Belkamel. They then decided to transform a potato field into a garden, to set up a production unit for natural cosmetics (Nectarome company), to carry out tests for science and international research on plants, and to add an awareness-raising dimension by opening it to the public.

Located at an altitude of 840m, 35km south of Marrakech, the first Bio-Aromatic Garden in Morocco is distinguished by its variety of plants and activities. One discovers the richness of the botany of Morocco and the region, through the fifty or so aromatic, medicinal and ornamental plants that are cultivated there.

## Djemaa El Fna

Djemaa el-Fna is a square and market place in Marrakesh's medina quarter. It remains the main square of Marrakesh, used by locals and tourists. The city's main square is the beating heart of Marrakech where fire-eaters, mime artists, snake-charmers and street musicians perform at every turn. There is a great choice of places to eat around the square, where you can sit and watch the entertainment unfold around you.

## Additional information

Although casual gear is widely acceptable, wearing any clothing that reveals arms or legs is disrespectful – appropriate attire is required when visiting mosques. Swimsuits, shorts, sleeveless tops and clingy clothing should be confined to the beach or poolside for both men and women.

## Grading

This tour has been graded as **Demanding**:

Walking tours every day and potential uneven grounds at the gardens visited. The touring days are very busy, and the group need to be together at all times for visits.

## Your lecturer / guide

David Hurrion started gardening as a young child and has been growing plants for more than 40 years. He has worked in gardens and nurseries, growing on a range of different soils and in different types of microclimates. His extensive knowledge and practical experience of plants, crops and growing techniques is founded on a thorough botanical and scientific training, complemented by an in depth understanding of garden design, wildlife, geology and climatology. He also trained as a teacher and has taught a huge diversity of subjects from botany, soil science and plant identification, to propagation, garden design and crop production, and from City & Guilds through to Degree level. He is also a popular speaker with local gardening groups.

As a journalist, David has spent more than 20 years writing for and editing the nation's crop of garden magazines, currently as Associate Editor for BBC Gardeners' World Magazine. He has also written for a number of websites and appeared both as a regular contributor and an expert commentator on TV and radio. David is a popular figure in the horticultural world, well liked and respected for his knowledge by nurserymen, professional gardeners, journalists and the gardening public. He has designed, built and planted show gardens and display stands at most of the major garden shows in the UK, including the world-famous Chelsea Flower Show, and is now a Designate Judge for the Royal Horticultural Society.

He has also travelled to every continent, with the exception of Antarctica, to discover plants and gardens, both independently and on more than 50 trips accompanying groups of gardeners.



## The Basics

**Climate** – Morocco is generally hot and dry but there is the chance of rain and much lower temperatures in the Atlas Mountains section of the tour. We, therefore, suggest that you go prepared for all eventualities.

**Time** – GMT +1 hour

**Language** – Arabic

**Religion** – Predominantly Muslim

**National holidays** – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Independence Manifesto Day (11 Jan); Labour Day (01 May); Throne Day (30 Jul); Oued Ed-Dahab Day (14 Aug); Revolution Day (20 Aug); King Mohammed IV's Birthday (21 Aug); Green March Day (06 Nov); Independence Day (18 Nov).

**Currency** – Moroccan Dirham. Dh1 = 100 centimes. Notes are in denominations of Dh200, 100, 50 and 20. Coins are in denominations of Dh10, 5 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5 centimes. The import and export of local currency is prohibited. The import and export of foreign currency is unlimited.

Moroccan Dirhams can only be obtained in Morocco. The most convenient way to obtain Dirhams is through an ATM, where official rates automatically apply.

**Banks** – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in most towns and cities. They official exchange rates apply. Alternatively, foreign currencies can be exchanged in into local money at official bureaux de change, there is no commission charge. Moroccan Dirhams must be exchanged back to the original currency upon departure.

**Banking hours** – Mon-Thurs 08:30-12:30 and 15:00-18:30, Fri 08:30-12:00 and 15:00-18:30.

**Credit cards** – Most major credit cards are accepted in larger restaurants, hotels and the occasional shop in the souks, with Visa and Mastercard being the most widely accepted.

**Electricity** – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

**Drinking water** – Water sources outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilisation is advisable. Bottled water is widely available.

**Shops** – Department stores and supermarkets are open Mon-Thurs 10:00-12:30 and 15:30-19:00, Fri 09:00-11:00 and 15:30-19:00. Shops are often open Friday afternoons and Sundays.

Haggling in the souks is a traditional necessity, so never pay regard to the initial prices. Instead fix a value to the items in your mind then negotiate towards it unhurriedly (Moroccans never rush their bargaining) and don't be afraid to walk away if the price isn't right.

**Clothes & Shoes** – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

**Camera** – Bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

**Bath plugs** – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

**Telephones/mobiles** – Roaming agreements exist with international mobile phone companies. Please check with your provider. Coverage is good in towns and cities.

**Tipping** –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



## Health

### Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**



### Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**

### General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit for Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

### Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

### Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



## Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

### Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)

Before you travel, make sure you've got a valid UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or travel insurance with health cover.

You may not have access to free emergency medical treatment and could be charged for your healthcare if you do not have an EHIC or GHIC when visiting an EU country, or travel insurance with full healthcare cover when visiting Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. If you have an EHIC it will still be valid while it remains in date. Your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) will be valid if you're travelling to an EU country.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For further information about the GHIC please visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>





## Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:  
00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 09:00-17:00), telephone our emergency staff on:  
00 44 7841 023807 or 00 44 7441 343850

**PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.**

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Embassy Rabat  
28 Avenue S.A.R. Sidi Mohammed  
Souissi 10105 (BP 45)  
Rabat  
Morocco  
Email: [UKinMorocco.Consular@fco.gov.uk](mailto:UKinMorocco.Consular@fco.gov.uk)  
Tel: +212 5376 33333  
Fax: +212 537 758709

Open Mon-Fri 08:00-12:00.  
Outside these hours, emergency consular assistance is available on +44 (0) 207 008 1500.

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