



Morocco



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Itineraries



Essential Morocco

Morocco is a big country, but in two weeks you can still comfortably cover a lot of ground and explore the best of what it has to offer, from imperial cities to mountains and desert.

Touch down in **Casablanca**, the commercial capital, and start with a tour of the stupendous Hassan II Mosque. Head by train to venerable **Fez**, with its ancient yet thriving medina.

Next, cross the Middle Atlas via **Midelt** for your first startling taste of Moroccan kasbah architecture, and the abandoned mining town of Aouli, dropped into the crevasse of a pretty gorge. Continue all the way to **Merzouga**, Morocco's gateway to the Sahara. Saddle up your camel and sleep under the stars amid the perfectly sculpted **Erg Chebbi**.

Shadowing the High Atlas as you head west brings you to the **Todra Gorge** for a day's hiking amid the canyons and *palmeraies* (palm groves). From here, head past Ouarzazate to **Ait Benhaddou**, with its fairy-tale-like 11th-century kasbah.

En route to the Atlantic, check into a riad in **Marrakesh**, and spend as many sunsets as possible on the theatrical Djemaa el-Fna, then don't stop until you reach artsy seaside medina and fishing port **Essaouira**.



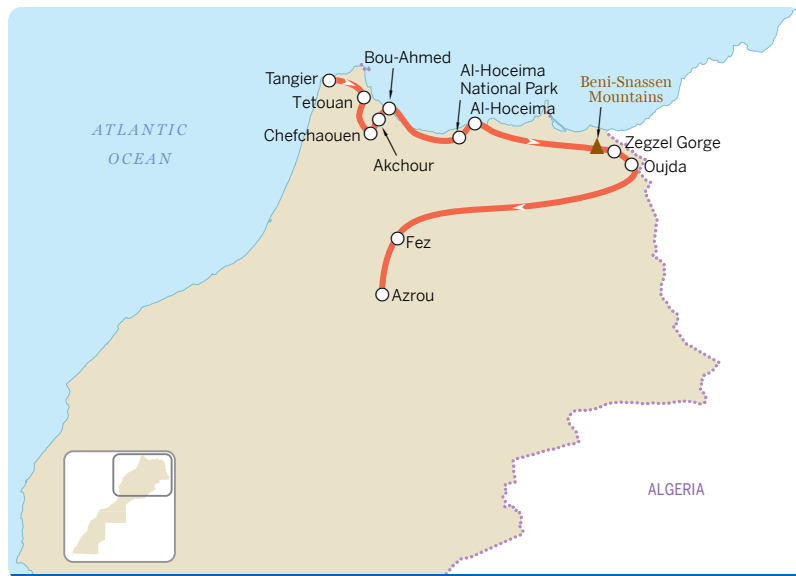
Circling the South

This itinerary takes you deep into the south for wild mountain and desert landscapes, far from clicking cameras, and with plenty of activities to stimulate the mind and body.

Agadir is a handy entry point, but adventurers will want to leave quickly. Head to tiny but vibey **Taфраoute**, surrounded by beautiful Anti Atlas scenery such as the **Ameln Valley**, with its lush *palmeraies* and pink-hued houses. Spend a few days trekking through the valley and up **Jebel L'Kest**, bike past rock formations and engravings to the surreal **Pierres Bleues**, known as the Painted Rocks, and continue south through the **Aït Mansour Gorges**. At the far end of the gorges, where the beautiful scenery belies the ancient slave routes that passed this way, stay in the Afella-Ighir oasis. Use **Tiwadou** as a base for more trekking or discovering the rock carvings at **Ukas**.

By now you'll have developed a taste for Morocco's secluded southern corners. Once back in Taфраoute, wind east through the Anti Atlas and descend to the equally silent and epic Sahara. The last stop before Jebel Bani and a whole lot of *hammada* (stony desert), **Tata** makes a convenient base for exploring the oases, kasbahs, *agadirs* (fortified granaries) and magnificent rock engravings in spots such as **Akka**. A dusty journey to the east, the yellow-gold dunes of **Erg Chigaga** are more remote and less visited than Merzouga. In nearby M'Hamid, find yourself a camel to lead you north into the kasbah-littered **Drâa Valley**.

At the top of valley, head back towards the mountains. Commandeer a bike (mountain or motor), horse, mule or dromedary in film favourite **Ouarzazate**, where the stony desert landscape has been a celluloid stand-in for Tibet, Rome, Somalia and Egypt. Return to the coast via **Taliouine**, where you can buy the world's most expensive spice in Africa's saffron capital. Pause here, or in **Taroudannt**, for a trekking reprise in a mountainous area such as the **Tichka Plateau**. With its red walls and backdrop of snowcapped peaks, Taroudannt has hassle-free echoes of Marrakesh. Its souqs and squares are pleasant places to relax, and it's handy for Agadir's Al-Massira Airport.



The Med & the Mountains

In the north the Mediterranean littoral and the Rif Mountains have seen huge investment from the government. Domestic tourism has boomed as a result, but travellers are yet to discover the region in numbers.

Start in **Tangier**, ideally arriving by ferry across the Strait of Gibraltar to feel the thrill of crossing from Europe to Africa. In the mid-20th century, characters from gun-runners to beatnik literati mixed in this legendary port city. After a few days taking in the history, nightlife and restaurants, skip inland to **Tetouan**, the old capital of Spanish Morocco, with its charming blend of Arab medina and Andalusian architecture. The Spanish left a lighter imprint on nearby **Chefchaouen**, nestled in the Rif Mountains with its gorgeous blue-painted medina. It's tempting to spend a string of sunsets listening to the minarets chorus each other's call to prayer, but this is also a good trekking spot. You can head deep into the mountains on a five-day trek via riverside **Akchour** to **Bou-Ahmed**, a fishing village in the Oued Bouchia valley.

Continue east along the coast to the proud, modern seaside resort of **Al-Hoceima**, gateway to the dry canyons and limestone cliffs of the **Al-Hoceima National Park**. Walk to the park along the coast, or book a memorable tour including hiking or mountain biking and a homestay with a Berber family. En route to the Algerian border, there's more fine scenery in the **Beni-Snassen Mountains**, which you can enjoy in a swimming pool with mountain views, or a 300-year-old rural lodge. With its gorges, caves, mesa and Barbary sheep, this verdant area is far removed from classic images of Morocco. In the **Zegzel Gorge**, pluck a cumquat and see why the Romans remarked on this small citrus fruit.

From here, head to **Oujda** to refresh yourself with some city comforts, before taking the train to that grandest of imperial cities, **Fez**. Dive into the medina and relax in a riad, but if you find yourself missing the countryside, you can make an easy day (or several-day) trip into the cedar-clad Middle Atlas around the Berber market town of **Azrou**.

6
WEEKS

Highlights & Hidden Gems

Given six weeks you can really dive deep into Morocco: explore its big-ticket destinations while still having plenty of time to discover its more hidden corners – getting off the beaten track or just taking more time to soak the country in.

Climb off a ferry in famously decadent **Tangier**, with its Europe-facing medina, and head into the **Rif Mountains**. European influence continues in **Chefchaouen**, with its bright blue, Andalucian-tiled medina. Further south, the imperial cities of **Fez** and **Meknès** are more quintessentially Moroccan in their ancient medinas. After a few days of labyrinthine lanes and dye pits, you'll be ready for more mountains. Wind through the **Middle Atlas** and on through the Martian landscape of the **Ziz Gorges**. It's now just a few dusty hours to **Erg Chebbi**, the achingly beautiful expanse of rolling dunes, which you can explore on a camel or sandboard.

Brush off the Sahara and return to the High Atlas at **Todra Gorge**. Hike between the enclosing rock walls, then jump in a market-bound truck through tiny villages and deeper into the mountains. **Imilchil**, surrounded by red rock and turquoise lakes, is the site of a wedding *moussem* (festival) in September. Descend through the High Atlas and turn southwest, pausing to refuel in Berber foodie and cultural hub **Demnate**. The next stop is **Marrakesh**, with its famous riad hotels, medina shopping and Djemaa el-Fna. Hit the wild west coast at hippie-turned-boutique hang-out **Essaouira**, then head south to vibrant **Taghazout**, Morocco's premier surf spot. Then take the N10 to **Taroudannt**, the Souss Valley's prettiest market town with its mud-walled medina and kasbah.

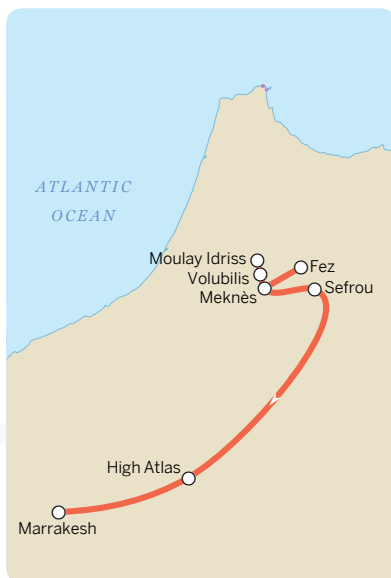
Travel barren mountains and empty roads to **Tata**, a Saharan gateway where blue-robed guides can show you the desert. The road back to the Atlantic passes oases, *palm-eraies*, kasbahs, *agadirs* and rock carvings. Near the coast, detour north to the **Tiznit** jewellery souq, particularly if it's a Thursday (market day).

Arcing west and south, you come to **Mirleft**, with its pink-and-blue arches, and **Sidi Ifni**, a jumble of wind-whipped art-deco relics surrounded by coastal walks. End your journey on the edge of the Western Sahara in sandy, gloriously isolated **Tarfaya**.

3
WEEKS

Atlantic Adventure

Morocco's Atlantic seaboard takes you from the clamour of the north to the quieter coastline of the south. It's a landscape where cities give way to dramatic sea cliffs, long sandy beaches and picturesque fishing ports. Take the ferry from Spain to **Tangier**, at once a quintessentially Moroccan mosaic and a decadent outpost of Europe. Catch the train south, first to chilled-out **Asilah**, with its whitewashed charms, and then to **Rabat**, with its colonial architecture and palm-lined boulevards. Follow Casablanca's suburbanites taking the spectacular ocean road to **Oualidia**, the St Tropez lookalike with a perfect crescent lagoon. Further south, the hippies once gravitated to **Essaouira**, and its white-walled ramparts, bohemian beat and renovated riads still make travellers linger. When you've eaten your fill at the outdoor fish grills, follow Jimi Hendrix and today's surfers to the peaceful beaches at **Diabat** and **Sidi Kaouki**. Past more surf spots, **Agadir** is a modern family-friendly seaside resort, but the beaches and boutique accommodation of **Mirleft** may be more appealing for other travellers, along with the Spanish art-deco treasures of **Sidi Ifni**.

10
DAYS

Empire & Atlas

This short route gives a fast-paced introduction into the best that Morocco has to offer – its ancient storied cities and medinas, and the mighty Atlas mountains that ripple in waves down the length of the country. This itinerary begins in two cities once ruled by enlightened dynasties. Throw back a shot of Maghrebi exoticism in **Fez**, where modern Morocco and its rich past crowd for space in the extraordinary medina. Next, catch your breath in nearby **Meknès**, bypassed by many travellers despite its echoes of Sultan Moulay Ismail's glory days. A detour north takes you to **Volubilis**, Morocco's best-preserved ancient city, and testament to the Roman Empire's astonishing breadth. Nearby **Moulay Idriss**, with the mausoleum of the founder of Morocco's first imperial dynasty, is another wonderful antidote to urban clamour. Head south into the Middle Atlas, stopping at the Berber town **Sefrou**, with its charming medina. From here, take the cross-country route via Beni Mellal, skirting the edge of the **High Atlas** to the icon of contemporary Morocco: **Marrakesh**. The city's souqs, street performers and imperial architecture form an intoxicating mix.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Lorna Parkes

[Fez Meknes and the Middle Atlas](#) Londoner by birth, Melburnian by palate and ex-Lonely Planet staffer in both cities, Lorna has spent more than 10 years exploring the globe in search of the perfect meal, the friendliest B&B, the best-value travel experience, and the most spectacular lookout point – both for her own pleasure and other people's. She's discovered she writes best on planes, and has contributed to numerous Lonely Planet books and magazines. Wineries and the

tropics (not at the same time!) are her go-to happy places. Follow her @Lorna_Explorer.



Regis St Louis

[Central Morocco](#) Regis grew up in a small town in the American Midwest—the kind of place that fuels big dreams of travel—and he developed an early fascination with foreign dialects and world cultures. He spent his formative years learning Russian and a handful of Romance languages, which served him well on journeys across much of the globe. Regis has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet titles, covering destinations across six continents. His travels have taken him

from the mountains of Kamchatka to remote island villages in Melanesia, and to many grand urban landscapes. When not on the road, he lives in New Orleans.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Jessica Lee

Marrakesh Jess high-tailed it for the road at the age of 18 and hasn't looked back since. In 2011 she swapped a career as an adventure-tour leader for travel writing and since then her travels for Lonely Planet have taken her across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. She has lived in the Middle East since 2007 and tweets @jessofarabia. Jess has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Egypt*, *Turkey*, *Cyprus*, *Marrakesh*, *Middle East*, *Europe*, *Africa*, *Cambodia*, and *Vietnam* guidebooks

and her travel writing has appeared in *Wanderlust* magazine, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent*, *BBC Travel* and *Lonelyplanet.com*.



Brett Atkinson

Southern Morocco and Western Sahara For this new edition of *Morocco*, Brett travelled from his New Zealand home to explore the fascinating medinas of Taroudannt and Tiznit, the spectacular Atlantic coastline, and the compellingly wild desert vistas of the Sahara. An absolute highlight was the poignant and elegant Spanish Art Deco architecture of Sidi Ifni. Brett's contributed to Lonely Planet guidebooks spanning

Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and covered over 60 countries as a food and travel writer. See www.brett-atkinson.net for his latest adventures.



Paul Clammer

Mediterranean Coast and the Rif Paul Clammer has worked as a molecular biologist, tour leader and travel writer. Since 2003 he has worked as a guidebook author for Lonely Planet, contributing to over 25 LP titles, covering destinations including swathes of South and Central Asia, West and North Africa and the Caribbean. In recent years he's lived in Morocco, Jordan, Haiti

and Fiji, as well as his native England. Find him online at paulclammer.com or on Twitter as @paulclammer.



Virginia Maxwell

Atlantic Coast Although based in Australia, Virginia spends at least half of her year updating Lonely Planet destination coverage in Europe and the Middle East. The Mediterranean is her favourite place to travel, and she has covered Spain, Italy, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Morocco for LP guide-

books – there are only eight more countries to go! Virginia also writes about Armenia, Iran and Australia. Follow her @maxwellvirginia on Instagram and Twitter.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

12th edition – August 2017

ISBN 978 1 786 570 321

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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