



# Semester At Sea Desert Adventure Tour

## **Tour Highlights:**

*Marrakech - Discover Morocco's vibrant Red City and the famous Jemaa El Fna square.*

*Meknes & Rabat - Explore two of Morocco's most fascinating imperial cities.*

*Fes - Wander through the atmospheric medina of the oldest Islamic medieval city in world, also known as the Mecca of the West.*

*Erg Chebbi Sand Dunes of Merzouga - This is the essence of a Moroccan adventure holiday. Ride a camel through the golden sand dunes of the Sahara Desert and refresh yourself at an oasis. In the evening, ride into the Berber nomad camp where you will spend the night and watch the dunes change color as the sun sets over the desert. Feast on traditional Moroccan cuisine before unwinding by the campfire and seeing the Milky Way like you've never seen it before, stretching out across an unspoiled night sky.*

*Todra Gorge & the Road of 1000 Kasbah - Walk in Morocco's Grand Canyon through spectacular rock formations and verdant valleys dotted with Berber clay houses and kasbahs, Morocco's iconic fortified dwellings.*

*The Atlas Mountains - Experience unforgettable views from rugged and isolated reaches of North Africa's highest mountain range.*

*Morocco's Vibrant Souks - Wander through the chaos and color of the local marketplaces and twisting backstreets of Morocco's imperial cities.*

**Apr, 11<sup>th</sup>:** Pick-up from Casablanca Port at 8 am - Visit Hassan II mosque - Marrakech Sightseeing tour - Ouarzazate

We will have a meet-and-greet at Casablanca port where you will see our Best Travel logo. For the students that have no 8 a.m. classes, we will explore the economic capital of the kingdom and its largest city. We will begin your discovery of the imperial cities with a visit to the courtyards of the splendid Hassan II Mosque. It is the world's second largest mosque and one of the Islamic world's greatest monuments. It is also the only working mosque in Morocco that can be visited by non-Muslims. We will depart

Distance: 190 miles / 289 km - Average driving time: 4 hours (excluding stops)

- Overnight in Fes: [Hotel Zahrat Aljabal](#) (BB)

### **Oct, 11<sup>th</sup>: Fes - Ifrane - Azrou - Midelt - Ziz Gorges - Rissani - Merzouga (Camel-trekking in the Erg Chebbi sand dunes)**

After breakfast our guide will come to pick you up from your Hotel in Fes. From there we will embark on a picturesque journey towards Ifrane, through hills covered in forests of cork oak and giant cedar in which a few Barbary apes still make their home. Crossing strikingly beautiful passes over both the Middle and High Atlas ranges we will catch our first glimpse of the south's incredible architecture. After passing through a barren plain of scrub and desert on the other side of the mountains, we will stop for lunch in the town of Midelt, from which we will have a fantastic view of the dramatic peaks of the High Atlas rising behind the town. Crossing Tizi-n-Talremt (Pass of the She-Camel), we will descend into a desert plain along the Ziz valley. We will then head south to Erfoud and Rissani, in a huge oasis containing over six million palm trees, edged by many ksours (fortified villages). Our route will continue through an immense palm oasis and a vast area of stony plain that marks the transition to the desert before reaching the tranquil desert town of Merzouga, where we've selected a charming kasbah hotel on the outskirts of the Erg Chebbi golden sand dunes. As is tradition here, you will be welcomed with a refreshing glass of mint tea. Here, all unnecessary luggage can be left in safe rooms at the kasbah before we embark on a one and a half hour camel trek that will take us to a Berber camp in the middle of the Erg Chebbi sand dunes. Some of these dunes tower to a height of 820 feet, and are the highest in North Africa. The camp consists of private, comfortable Berber tents equipped with mattresses, linens, toilets, a restaurant, and a kitchen. The evening will consist of stargazing and a Moroccan dinner followed by a traditional music show. We will spend the night in the silence of the desert, and you can relax outside and marvel at the Milky Way spreading across the pitch-black night sky, and maybe even see some shooting stars.

Distance: 286 miles / 461 km - Average driving time: 7 hours 30 min (including stops)

- Overnight in Sahara Desert / Erg Chebbi dunes: Well-equipped Berber camp (HB)

### **Oct, 12<sup>th</sup>: Merzouga - Erfoud - Toroug - Saghru mountains - Todra Gorges - Dades valley - Dades Valley - Rose Valley - Skoura - Ouarzazate**

If you would like, your camel guide will wake you up early so that you can watch the spectacle of sunrise, when the colour of the dunes contrast beautifully with the play of shadows. After a cup of tea, we will ride the camels for a couple of hours (or less - it is up to you) to the kasbah, where you will have breakfast and shower before departing to the fortified village of Rissani in the Tafilalet region. Nestled at the edge of the Ziz Valley, Rissani is a traditional desert village which houses the impressive Mausoleum of Moulay Ali Sharif, the first ruler of the Alawite dynasty, which thrived here in the 17th century. We will journey through the impressive Todra Gorges and past the eastern slopes of the Atlas Mountains to the Tinerhir Oasis, with its green valley of palms and traditional villages, before continuing on a scenic drive through the Dades Valley, also known as the "Valley of 1000 Kasbahs", with wonderful views across the fertile Dades Valley. We will then drive through the local villages, passing fields cultivated by Berber women, with the peaks of the High Atlas as a fitting backdrop. Our journey will continue toward Ouarzazate, going off-road along the piste to visit Berber nomads in their caves and join them for a glass of tea. From here, we will continue through the Valley of the Roses, famous for its Rose Festival in May, and past the Road of 1000 Kasbahs by the Skoura Oasis before arriving in Ouarzazate. In Ouarzazate, also known as the "Hollywood of Morocco", we will visit the cinematographic museum and Taourirt Kasbah before checking in at our hotel.

Distance: 228 miles / 366 km - Average driving time: 7 hours (including stops)

- Overnight in Dades Valley: [Hotel la Vallée](#) (HB)

### **Oct, 13<sup>th</sup>: Ouarzazate - Ait Benhaddou Kasbah - Atlas Mountains - Marrakech (Sightseeing)**

Our route continues to Kasbah Ait Benhaddou, the most famous kasbah in Morocco, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the backdrop for many Hollywood blockbusters such as "Gladiator", "Indiana Jones" and "Lawrence of Arabia". After a guided visit to the kasbah, we will continue across the territory of the powerful Glaoui tribe where a number of ancient kasbahs and fortified granaries dot the countryside. We will cross the picturesque High Atlas Mountains through the Tizi'n Tichka pass at an altitude of 7,415 feet, the highest vehicular pass in Morocco. The road passes through various villages that are typical of northern slopes of the mountains, where corn can be seen ripening in the sun on the packed earth roofs of the stone houses. Around midday we will reach Marrakech, the second largest imperial city in Morocco, also known as "The Pearl of South". Upon arrival, we will begin our two to three hour sightseeing tour, escorted by an official local guide. Inside the rose coloured medina walls is a tangle of winding streets and alleys that open onto verdant gardens and bustling souks, the perfect place to hone your bargaining skills. We will visit the Bahia Palace, Koutoubia Minaret and the Menara Gardens, as well as the vibrant and chaotic Djemaa El Fna square, which by day is a marketplace, but by night transforms into an open air theatre and a place for

non-stop entertainment. You will have the evening to spend as you wish. Your guide will also suggest some optional activities for your night in Marrakech.

**Distance:** 122 miles / 196 km - **Average driving time:** 4 hours

- **Overnight in Marrakech:** [Hotel Palais Bahja](#) (BB)

**Apr, 14<sup>th</sup>:** Free time in Marrakech - Depart from Marrakech to Casablanca at 10:30 am to be in the SAS ship 2:30 PM

On your last morning in Marrakech you will have a little bit of time to wander around and look for any souvenirs or last-minute gifts for friends before we pack up and make the short drive back to Casablanca. We will leave Marrakech around 10:30 a.m., leaving plenty of time to return to the SAS ship for departure.

**Distance:** 140 miles / 226 km - **Average driving time:** 3 to 4 hours

**The price is €180 EUR / \$200 USD Per person**

**Inclusions:**

- Transportation / Fuel / drivers: 5 days in an air-conditioned & comfortable vehicle (motorcoach / minibuses).
- Guidance: Services of qualified official English-speaking guide(s).
- Comprehensive sightseeing including guidance.
- Three night's accommodation in a well-recommended hotel / kasbah.
- One night's stay in a traditional Berber fire-camp.
- Camel ride (a camel per each individual).
- Breakfast & dinner daily.
- Sandboarding (free & optional).
- Traditional music live show.
- Travel Insurance: Passenger travel insurance per person for 5 days.

**Exclusions:**

- Lunch
- Drinks, tips & personal items

## ▪ Tour Checklist:

Here are the most important items to bring for your desert adventure.

- ✓ Long-sleeve, lightweight shirt (to protect you from sunburns).
- ✓ Antibacterial hand wash gel - important for use before eating and after toilet stops.
- ✓ Torch - LED head torches are ideal. Spare batteries and bulb.
- ✓ Camera (bring spare batteries and memory card / film) and use a plastic bag to protect your camera from the fine sand grains that could easily get into your lens.
- ✓ Sunglasses.
- ✓ Sunscreen.
- ✓ Sun hat with wide brim (we will provide scarves).
- ✓ Lip salve with sun block if you have sensitive skin.
- ✓ Toothbrush and toothpaste.
- ✓ Personal first aid kit (since we will be driving on winding roads, please include dramamine if you experience motion sickness)
- ✓ Also, for the camel ride, try to wear long light pants to protect your legs from chafing against the saddle and the camel's rough fur.

SEE YOU SOON :)