

THE BEST OF MOROCCO

October 27- November 9, 2008

Visit exotic Casablanca, Fes, Sahara Desert, and Marrakesh with Winnie and Meli!

ITINERARY

Day 1, Casablanca

Arrive at Casablanca airport. Transfer to Hotel Kenzi Basma. The tour will start at 13:00 hours at the lobby of the hotel. After a short introduction we will go out for lunch and city sightseeing. We will visit the **Hassan II Mosque, The Corniche of Ain Diab, Anfa District & Habous District** where there are handicraft shops. At the hotel we will have group meeting at 5:00 PM at the lobby of the hotel. Before dinner, we will walk to the walled part of the city, **the Medina**, where hundreds of shops lined up to meet the needs of the locals. The narrow streets, colorful shops and the wonderful display of the produce will be a great introduction to the daily life of the Moroccans. Tonight after dinner, you may walk to Café Casablanca of the famous movie.



Day 2 Rabat, Meknes

We will leave **Casablanca** at 08:00 am. Driving along the Atlantic Ocean, we will go through the little villages with stunning architecture, and wonderful vegetation. It seems like the flowers bloom twice as much and the colors are brighter than similar plants elsewhere. When we drive through the clean streets of **Muhammedia**, how a good mayor can make a difference will be obvious. **Rabat** is the Capital of Morocco. You will have free time at the **Medina of Rabat**. The leather shops, lantern shops and the food stands surrounded with the locals dressed in their traditional "cloaks", **jillaba**, will make you take more pictures than you can even dream of taking. We like to finish this visit before the call to prayer at lunch time. Because once there is the call to prayer, the whole market shuts down and would not open until 04:00 PM. Before lunch, we will walk through the narrow, clean, white washed streets of walled neighborhood **Kasbah Oudaya**. How can any one be so creative to have so many different, equally creative and beautiful doors? You wonder if the inspiration of the colors - blue and white - is coming from the color of the circling sea gulls and the clear blue sky or the blue of the ocean and the white surfs breaking on the rocks at the shore of this city. The creativity and the warmth of the colors that surround you are also woven into carpets that the neighborhood women make while they are singing lullaby to their children who are either sleeping in a little wooden cradle or tied on their backs. Lunch at **Borj Eddar Restaurant**. The view of the Atlantic Ocean and the sounds of the waves will accompany a marvelous fish lunch. **Muhammed the 5th Mausoleum**, the 12th century unfinished mosque, **Hasan Tower**, the palace of the King of Morocco, the horses guarding the 800 year old walls are few other pleasures to our eyes before we leave Rabat for **Meknes**. Rabat's sister city Sale will be our next stop. The road to Meknes winds up to the rolling hills where cork tree orchards are surrounded by olive groves and vineyards and the Berber's hats flying on the road side racks. Tonight our dinner will be at a typical Spanish restaurant **Sungria** Overnight at Hotel Riff in Meknes. There is an internet café near the hotel.

Day 3 Meknes, Volubilis, Moulay Idris, Fes

It is like a fairy tale. Once upon a time, there lived a king **Moulla Ismail** from 16th Century. He needed horses to defend his kingdom. Therefore, the 12000 horses deserved the best home, best water and best care. Entering the stable through arched gates. you wonder if the building was built for the

horses or to prove simplicity can create undisputable grandeur. The Barber who greets the visitors at the entrance of Mausoleum of **Moulay Ismail** with his traditional costume and every imaginable charm to ward off evil , make one feel totally safe for the rest of one's life for just being around him. Our next stop will be the **Souk of Meknes**. We will go through innumerable gates of the 15 mile long city walls to get to where we immerse ourselves to the world of colors. If we ban the use of these words for the day : " Oh my god ! it is wonderful" we will have a total silence all day long!! Our lunch will be a typical Moroccan food at **Restaurant Tarrad** .The color of the saffron, the taste of the olive oil and the steaming pots with pointed tops will not only make us feel good after the long morning site seeing but will be a great photo op for those who are interested in taking pictures. I am sure after this meal most of us will have our choices of cooking enriched.

When we leave Meknes behind, the winding road goes through cactus forests, olive orchards and wheat fields. The Roman Bridge by a white washed small city , **Moulla Idris**, gives us the news that we are arriving at our next destination: **Volubilis**, the most complete Roman city that I have seen after Ephesus.Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, In Volubilis , the Romans had enjoyed the prosperity of the region and built their city to reflect their wealth. They have immortalized their sense of humor on mosaics .When the last rays of the setting sun change colors of the trees and the hill side to every shade of orange and red, we will arrive in Fez. Much deserved rest will be at our wonderful hotel in the heart of the city. **Dinner at restaurant Palais de Medina. Overnight at Hotel Wassima**

Day 4 Fes

The morning call to prayer echoes from the minarets as the city wakes up. We will leave the hotel at 09:00. There are three cities of FEZ. Simply we can remember them as the old one, new one and the very new one. The cities have been built in three different valleys as if each is respecting the other. The Jewish quarter of the 15th century and **Andulician neighborhoods** reflect the influence of Spanish architecture. If one were in another place, this neighborhood could have been worth a day's sightseeing but in Fez the most amazing place to be at is the Market. The **Medina**. the Market of Fez is orderly in its own way. Walking in the streets, the right a way is given to the donkeys. The cats have the right to keep the head of the line in front of the butcher shops, and shopkeepers have the right, in a pleasant way, to drive you crazy with their salesmanship. Bargaining is the name of the game. GOOD LUCK!! Leather tanning, weaving, wood carving, leather dying, brass and copper engraving, tile making, are only few of many other crafts being practiced under the arches, in dark alleys and in small courtyards. Walking in the old city is overwhelming, exciting, and tempting. Make sure your camera has sufficient film and battery. After lunch in the Medina, **The Medina restaurant** , we will continue appreciating the amazing craftsmanship of the Moroccans when we visit a huge ceramic mosaic work shop. If you still have energy for dinner, to night we will listen to UT music while we dine **at Isla Blanca** . Overnight at the same hotel in Fez. The restaurants where we will eat today will have the wonderful traditional architecture and authentic food.

Day 5 Fes - Ifrane - Azrou - Midelt- Erfoud

We will leave at 08:00 am from the hotel in Fes for a long but very interesting ride. As we climb up to the Atlas Mountains, the smell of the seeder trees will indicate the altitude. The higher we go, the tenser the seeders smell. After a short stop by a lake which looks like a bird paradise, we will hit 7000 feet with snow on the ground. Hard to believe that at the end of a long drive, we will end up in SAHARA desert to day. We will be able to make home visits at **Bouran village** and meet locals. We will suggest you to learn few words from the phrases section of the tour hand book . It will help very much: MERHABA means Hello and SHUKRAN means Thank you. The lunch will be at **Midelt** city at Hotel Ayashi. Once we enter the **Valley of ZIZ**, the landscape changes from Alpine to Grand Canyon to Gobi desert image .The palm forests are dotted by poplar trees whose leaves are bright yellow. The villages are surrounded with pink city walls. The major form of transportation is either donkeys or bicycles. The Berber people definitely look different from those we have seen in the other cities of Morocco so far. To night we, will stay at a hotel where the sounds of the desert will whisper to

your ears the stories of the Berbers that we will meet tomorrow. Dinner and overnight will be at the **Palm's Hotel in Erfoud**

Day 6 Erfoud - Sahara Desert

Today is a relaxing day in the morning . We will not leave our hotel until 10:00 am. If any one is interested in internet, the connection is available in the lobby. To night , we want to have a night bag so will have to leave our suitcases and purchases at the hotel. Those who do not want to go shopping can spend the morning at the hotel by the pool. We will have picnic at the desert with fruits and sandwich. In **Erfoud** there is a small market which has easily accessible to old valuables. For Berber scarves, brass and copper items you can have some good choices. The bargaining is tremendous. Please be prepared. After market visit we ride in 4-wheel drive land rovers. We will leave for the **SAHARA DESERT**. We will get to see the fossils of the desert, and visit Nomad families in their black tents. Their hospitality is amazing but they are really poor. They instantly offer bread and mint tea. I would very much like to bring food purchased from the local market to these children rather than giving them candies . To night we will have the option of staying at a tent or hotel room in the Sahara Desert at **Merzouga** Unfortunately ,since the rooms and the tents are limited, you have to decide which you prefer. you can change your preference only if room or tent available when we arrive. for more info on the hotel rooms and tents please check the [Tourhandbook Hotel Info](#) Before the sun goes down, we will take camels for an hour ride to the top of the sand dunes to watch the sun set in the desert. Dinner and overnight at the **Hotel Timbacktou** or at the tents if you choose. Before the sun goes down, we will take camels for an hour ride to the top of the sand dunes to watch the sun set in the desert. Dinner and overnight at the Hotel

Day 7 Sahara

Our second day at the Sahara was strongly suggested by our previous tour members. This will be an excellent relaxing day and it will be great for those who are looking for more free time on their own. We will start the day at 09:00 for a visit at a **Touarag family**'s excellent collection of desert hand craft, we will see the demonstration of hand woven carpets of Morocco, wood carvings, jewelry and hard to name many objects which made life in the desert easy and aesthetic. . On the streets of Morocco every where you can find excellent examples of tapestry, carpets and kilims. But it seems like, this family and their shop looks like the first one I have found where we can get good ethnographic description on the hand crafts we see in Morocco. I will recommend you not to get too excited about shopping here. The souks has a lot of similar items but the advantage here they accept credit card and we want to hear some information. Please check the comments on this place from the tour members on the previous tours. Our next stop will be a visit the Local Souque (Market)of **Er Rissani** .The Local people come with their donkeys, from all around Sahara. At the donkey parking lot there are hundreds of donkeys happily parked, making new friends while waiting for their owners. After 1 hour on your own for the pleasure of your eyes and for the utmost cultural experience, we will return to our Hotel in the desert. Lunch at the hotel. A nice bath at the Turkish Bath or a refreshing swim at the beautiful pool might be a good way of spending the afternoon. If any body wants to get on a camel and go back to the sand dunes the camel drivers will be more than happy to assist you in this adventure. Dinner will be at the **Hotel Timbacktou**.

Day 8 Merzouga, Er Risanni, Erfoud, Tinghir ,Ouarzazate

After breakfast we will leave the fascinating Sahara sand dunes behind. We will drive towards **Ouarzazate** passing by beautiful Tuareg and Barber villages, **Gorges Tudra** and old Kasbahs De Glowi which can not be lived in anymore, rose gardens and panoramic views of the villages and smaller kasbahs. We will arrive at Quarzazete at around 07:00 PM Overnight and dinner at Hotel Kenzi Azghor.

Day 9 Tourent

We will leave at 9:30 this morning. In Quarzazette, our local guide will take us for a visit an 18th Century , air condition and telephone systemic, 110 room kasbah (the administrative center) which once belonged to a pasha (high officer in the army). This Kasbah will be a great way to understand how rich man "used" to live in Morocco. We will continue to **Ait Benhaddou**, it is one of the oldest and well preserved Kasbahs in the whole Atlas region. It hosted seen in more than 20 Movies such as Indiana Jones, Asterix & Oburix, Lawrence of Arabia, Jesus of Nazareth and The Gladiator. All the local people played a role in the Movie "The Gladiator" , the big arena which the fights took place in the movie was set right in the middle of this Kasbah and all the shop owners proudly uses the pictures from the gladiator to attract customers in their shops. It takes bout 25 minutes hike to reach top of the Kasbah for a magnificent view of the stone desert and panoramic view. If you choose not to walk up - easy walk, there is a quiet little coffee house and few shops to entertain you. We will take our lunch at this village. After lunch we will pass, many small villages, primary school and Natural saffron shops, during our 5 hour bus ride to Tourent. Dinner and Overnight at Hotel Palais Salam.

www.groupesalam.com

Day 10 Tourent, Agadir, Essaouira

We do not need to rush out of the hotel this morning. The garden is so beautiful. You might want to swim in the pool which is surrounded with wonderful vegetation. You can sip your coffee by the waterfall fountain leaning its back to the ancient city wall. We will leave at 10:30 AM, for **Agadir**. After the earthquake in 1960 where thousands of people had died, the city was flattened completely and was re built leaving no remnant of the old city. The tourist industry from Europe had used up almost all of the shore line, making the miles of great sea shore look like "Costa del Sole" of Spain. So we will quickly get out of this city and immerse our selves once again to the real face of Morocco. The lunch will be at a wonderful fish restaurant in town.. The afternoon ride will be on a narrow, winding road which is surrounded with trees where goats climb to the top ,to eat the last fruit on the farthest branch. We will arrive at **Essaouira** in the Late afternoon. After we check in our wonderful hotel, we will have a walk in the Medina of the city to orient you to what is where so the next day you can be on your own to explore this wonderful town on the Atlantic ocean. Dinner will be on your own. Overnight at Hotel Des ILLLES.

Day 11 Essaouira

We found Essaouira so beautiful that we wanted to spend 2 days at this wonderful sea port town. **Essaouira** was established by the Portuguese as a harbor for slave trade in the 16th century, The fortified city is the only reminder of the grim past of the city. Of all the Moroccan sites, this is the most cheerful one. The wonderful beach that stretches along the city is a haven for the sea gulls and camels, not to mention the para-gliders, and the fishermen chasing crab. The fisherman's marina is lined with blue painted boats . One wonder why they might have chosen the color of the ocean to paint these boats. Could they be hiding in the ocean once they rowed their boats out of the harbor? The square of the city is lined with many little fish restaurants. We will have the tour members be on their own for their lunch to day so they can choose what delicious food they might want. Your choices can be shrimp, crab, various unusual fish just caught in the ocean. The market has some very interesting shops. For those who have had of shopping, a walk on the beach, walking through the narrow streets , or having a quiet time at one of the lovely side walk cafés can be a wonderful place to catch up with your journals or post cards. Lunch and dinner on your own. Overnight at **Hotel Des Illes**.

Day 12 Essaouira, Marakesh

We will leave the town in the afternoon for a 3 hour bus ride to Marakesh. On the way to Marrakesh, a few piece of land which can be cultivated is being plowed by camels and donkeys as they must have done for thousands of years. Along the way, there is a cooperative established by women and supported by UN Women programmes. We will see how Argan oil is being processed and every thing that can be produced with argan oil - creams, soaps etc.

At Marakesh we will stay at Hotel El Andalous. Dinner is not included to night. You will have free time at the legendary Marakesh Town Circle. Hundreds of food stands to choose from if you can find time from taking pictures of the night life going around you. Snakes, monkeys, color and sound every where. You can even get hand or face tattoo, sneak into the souk or watch the crowd while sipping your coffee or mint tea.

Day 13 Marakesh

We will start the day at 09:00 with site seeing of the palaces of Marrakesh. The city looks like it has been painted with the color of the sun that was diluted with the color of the rose water. **The palaces** were built to secure the tons of gold that was brought to Marrakesh on the caravan roads. While the rulers enjoyed the wealth, the common man could only enjoy the activity in the town square brought by the men and woman on the caravans. Today at the town center, we can still see **the remnants of the medieval entertainment:** The musicians, the snake dancers, the monkeys, fortune tellers, the tight rope walkers congregate in the middle of the town and perform their best for a pennies of bahshish in a hat. Before we go to the souk which is a world of its own, we will visit 2 small museums. Then you will be on your own. Lunch will be on your own. You can spend the all afternoon wondering in the streets of **Marrakesh souk.** You will probably want to do this on your own. But if you need the assistance of the guide, he will be there for you. Tonight, we will have dinner at **Ca local restaurant with nice authentic music.** Overnight at Hotel El Andalous.

Day 14 Marrakesh

After breakfast, transfer to the airport.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour Price

US\$ 3,012.- Per person in a double room min. 20 people in the group

US\$ 3,200.- Per person in a double room min 10 people in the group

US\$ 340 - Single room supplement

Tour Includes

- 4-5 star Hotels for 13 Nights (Choice of tent for one-two night in Sahara)
- 34 meals (11 Lunches, 10 Dinners,13 breakfasts)
- One big bottle of water a day on the bus
- Transfers on arrival and on departure even if you arrive early or depart late
- Moroccan Guide through out the tour
- Local guides where necessary
- Desert Land Rovers
- Camel ride
- Tips to local guides and camel tenders
- Tip at the restaurants and hotels
- All the entrance fees to all sites mentioned in the itinerary
- All land transportation by bus

Not Included

- International flights
- Transfer on arrival in case there is an un announced flight change
- Drinks (Melitour will provide you with one big bottle of water every day but drinks at the meals will not be included)
- 2 dinners and 1 Lunch in Essaouira

- 1 dinner and 1 lunch in Marrakesh
- Tips for the driver and the guide (please check FAQ)

Payment Schedule:

The payment can be made in three equal payments.

- Credit Card (Master Card or Visa card) or
- Check deposit to our Bank of America account

Bank of America

Account name: Mehlika Seval

Account # 95544797

Wedgewood Branch

Address: 8405 35th Ave NE Seattle, WA 98115

Routing #: 125000024

<u>Payment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Cancellation Penalty</u>
Deposit	At sign up	US\$ 250	Non refundable
1st Payment	3/10/08	US\$ 800	If cancelled 60% of this payment is refundable
2nd Payment	7/27/08	US\$ 1000	If cancelled 50% of your total payment is refundable
3rd Payment	8/27/08	Balance	If cancelled after this payment no refund will be given

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU PURCHASE TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE