

# MOROCCO HANDCRAFTS

# ITINERARY 2026

AS AT MARCH 2026

8 - 24 April  
29 April – 15 May

retreat|recreate is delighted to offer these fabulous, socially responsible, small group women's 17-day textiles and handcrafts tours.

Discover the fascinating fusion of Africa, Arab & Amazigh that is Morocco, through the lens of the country's textile and handcraft traditions.

Explore specialist handcraft and cultural museums, artisan studios, embroidery, dyeing and carpet co-operatives and the famous souks of Fes and Marrakech.

Enjoy SIX private handcraft experiences (embroidery, leatherwork, carpet knotting & weaving, palm leaf weaving, botanical dyeing and *zellige* mosaic tiling). Engage with local families and artists, be inspired by incredible design and craftsmanship, explore multiple UNESCO World Heritage listed sites, cities and rural villages, and travel through stunning scenery including the Sahara desert and the ancient Atlas Mountains.

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Day 1

Wednesday

MARRAKECH

Riad Shanima

Salaam aleikum! Welcome to Morocco!

You will be collected from Marrakech airport (RAK) and transferred to our lovely *riad* (traditional Moroccan home set around an inner courtyard) located deep in the heart of the busy Marrakech medina.

Our tour begins with a **briefing meeting at 6pm (TBC)** where you'll meet our local Moroccan guide, your fellow travellers and your retreat|recreate host.

This will be followed by a **welcome dinner** where we'll introduce you to traditional Moroccan cuisine and we can start to get to know each other.

Meals: Dinner



Day 2

Thursday

MARRAKECH

Riad Shanima

Today we'll dive straight into our Moroccan handcrafts exploration with visits to **two of Marrakech's best textile and handcraft museums** – the Berber Museum at Jardin Marjorelle, and the MAP Museum (museum of adornment).

These museums are a fabulous way to begin getting to know Morocco's traditional craftsmanship including textiles, jewellery, woodwork, carpets, metalwork, embroidery and clothing. It's a rich cultural morning and an excellent introduction to the theme of our tour.

In the afternoon the delights continue as we enjoy our very first hands-on textile experience – learning the art of the famously intricate **Fessi embroidery** from a group of disabled women who've banded together to earn an independent income from their stitching skills.

It's **free time** for dinner tonight. A list of recommended dining options will be provided closer to departure.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 3

Friday

MARRAKECH

Riad Shanima

This morning we head into the winding lanes of the Marrakech medina for another fabulous immersive experience. In the heart of the leather souk we will meet an artisan who will guide us through the process of **making our own pair of babouches** (traditional Moroccan slippers). What a perfect handmade souvenir of our handcraft exploration of Morocco!

This afternoon is **free time** as it's the last opportunity to either hit the Marrakech souks for any shopping you're keen on, indulge in a hammam, explore more of the excellent museums and galleries or simply find a café on the bustling main square and people watch over a mint tea (again, we'll have a list of suggestions available for our travellers).

Meals: Breakfast



**Day 4** **Saturday**

**OUIRGANE** Ouirgane EcoLodge

The road beckons! Today we meet our private coach driver, bid farewell to Marrakech, and head out of town. We'll very quickly find ourselves in the High Atlas Mountains as we travel south through stunning scenery.

Our first destination is a **traditional Amazigh (Berber) home** nestled by a river in a small rural village. Our charming hostess Saida will show us around her house and productive garden, and we'll enjoy a home cooked lunch on her terrace.

In the afternoon we'll continue our drive to **Ouirgane**, a picturesque Amazigh village in the heart of the **Toubkal National Park**. We'll enjoy a walk through the countryside to stretch our legs and admire the scenery.

Dinner is included at our eco-lodge accommodation tonight (as it will be most nights while we're on the road trip part of the tour).

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



**Day 5** **Sunday**

**AIT BEN HADDOU** Hotel Ouinz

Another day of once in a lifetime experiences awaits us as we travel the justly famous **Route of a Thousand Kasbahs** to the most famous one of all, the UNESCO World Heritage listed kasbah of **Ait Ben Haddou** (pictured above). If it looks familiar, it's because you've probably seen it at the movies, in Game of Thrones, Lawrence of Arabia, Gladiator and so many more.

Depending on the time of our arrival we may enjoy a walking tour around the kasbah, or we may save this for the morning.

Tomorrow we'll each dye a scarf with the women from a local cooperative. In preparation, those who wish to, may spend a little time later this afternoon doing some tie dye prep. We'll provide pegs and rubber bands – feel free to bring your own tie dye tools too, especially if you're good at fancy stitched shibori!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



**Day 6** **Monday**

**AIT BEN HADDOU** Hotel Ouinz

This morning we'll visit a local **women's carpet co-op** – we'll meet some of the women and see demonstrations of spinning, carding, weaving and knotting. We'll also learn about the various styles of carpets and the meanings of their woven symbols. If you wish to buy a carpet, this is a great opportunity, knowing that the money goes directly to the women, with no middle man.

At a nearby tiny local co-op we'll enjoy a **natural dyeing** experience. Traditionally, craftswomen dyed with local plants, however these days synthetic dyes are mostly used, so it's a treat to engage with a group who are maintaining traditional dye practices. We'll dye our scarves (the ones we prepped last night) with pomegranate, turmeric or madder, depending on what's on offer at the time.

Lunch will be at the co-op – *we will sit on the floor for this meal.*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



**Day 7** **Tuesday**

**TAMNOUGALT** Kasbah des Caid's

We'll drive through the Atlas Mountains to **Tamnougalt**. Our destination is the 15<sup>th</sup> century Kasbah des Caid's in the Draa Valley. Set in a lush palm oasis, the Kasbah is rustic, but is a **highlight of the tour**. We'll meet the current owner of the kasbah (descendent of the village's original *caid*, or chief), hear about local life in the village and the ongoing restoration works of the kasbah.

The building has few mod cons. Beds are (comfortable!) mattresses on the floor, most rooms have no windows, and the building is dark with narrow, windy, steep and uneven staircases. Bathrooms are shared. Lighting is low, the floors (and walls) are packed earth and there is limited water. It's a fabulous, authentic experience, but you *must be physically able and prepared* to cope with this rustic homestay experience.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



**Day 8** **Wednesday**

**TAMNOUGALT** Kasbah des Caid's

Today is a relaxed day soaking up the slow kasbah life. We'll have a walking tour of the village, after which there'll be a **demonstration of traditional palm leaf mat weaving** and we can have a turn ourselves. (*Note, we sit on the ground for this experience.*)

Lunch will be under the palm trees in the oasis (weather permitting) and the afternoon will be **free time** to spend as you wish. You can relax in the rooftop lounge of the kasbah and enjoy some down time with a book, or handcraft project (bring your knitting, stitching, sketchbook etc), or you might enjoy wandering around the village. The choice is yours. It's Day 8 and the perfect opportunity halfway through the busy tour to simply chill.

Tonight after dinner we'll have the opportunity to rock the kasbah, with live music and dancing with local Gnaoua musicians. (*The evening musical entertainment may occur the previous night, depending on the musicians' schedule.*)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9 Thursday



Day 10 Friday



Day 11 Saturday



Day 12 Sunday



Day 13 Monday

**SAHARA DESERT** Golden Camp

Pack an overnight bag for our desert adventure! We'll continue our road trip, heading towards the Algerian border and the mighty Sahara desert. On the way we'll stop at Kasbah El Khorbat, a small rural village where the locals have established a fabulous **folkcraft museum** and a **women's embroidery co-op** within their traditional kasbah.

Late in the day we'll arrive at **Merzouga** and travel through the stunningly beautiful dunes to our luxury camp in the **Sahara Desert**.

This evening there'll be Gnaoua music around the campfire under the breathtaking starry Saharan sky.

Our tents tonight have proper beds, air conditioning, wifi and ensuite bathroom facilities. This is glamping!

*The single supplement does not apply tonight. All solo travellers will be paired up.*

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

**MIDELT** Hotel Taddart

Rise early this morning if you want to witness a **glorious sunrise** (weather permitting) over the magnificent Saharan sand dunes. After breakfast we'll saddle up our **camels** and enjoy a quiet trek through the dunes back to town. This camel ride is a once in a lifetime experience, however you can travel by jeep if you prefer.

Our destination today is **Midelt**, a market town originally built as a base for mining, nestled between the Atlas and Anti-Atlas mountains at an elevation of 1500 metres.

In Midelt we'll visit a **women's handcraft co-operative** in the afternoon. The embroidery work of these women is of a high standard and is very impressive. Originally they learnt their stitching skills from a community of French Franciscan nuns who settled here, and they still maintain close ties with the few nuns left in the convent.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

**FES** Riad Nass Zmane

Saying goodbye to the Atlas Mountains today, we drive toward **Fes**, a fascinating living example of the medieval Arab world, with its mind-blowingly enormous medina of over 9000 tiny lanes and alleys.

On the way we may stop for morning tea with a nomad family if they're home. *Note, we sit on the floor during this visit.*

Upon arrival in Fes we'll dive straight into its cultural delights with a tour of its best **ceramic studio**. Morocco, and Fes in particular, is famous for its **zellige** mosaic tilework, and we are lucky to be able to experience the process as we make a small coaster sized piece in our very own **zellige mosaic workshop**. The studio makes wheel thrown pots, dishes and tagines as well as zellige tiles.

Dinner tonight is included; we are very privileged to be invited to dine with a local family at their home.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

**FES** Riad Nass Zmane

Today we'll have an all day **guided walking tour of the Fes medina**, the largest urban car-free city in the world and another UNESCO World Heritage listed site. During our walking tour we'll see a multitude of artisan studios within the souks - many of the artisans are running businesses in the same tiny studios as their ancestors, generation upon generation. There are metal workers, weavers, tool makers, embroiderers, wood workers, copper beaters and leather workers among others.

Of course, no visit to Morocco is complete without visiting the world famous **tanneries** (pictured) where workers dye leathers and skins in enormous dye vats that have been in continuous operation since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. (If you're interested in buying leather goods in Morocco such as jackets, bags and footstools, this is a good opportunity).

*Note, we will be on our feet all day today aside from at lunch.*

Meals: Breakfast

**FES** Riad Nass Zmane

As we have seen over the past week or so, carpet knotting and weaving are a part of everyday life for many Moroccan women, particularly rural Amazigh women. Skills and expertise are passed from grandmother to mother to daughter. In addition to providing additional income, carpet weaving is an important way of maintaining and strengthening Amazigh culture and traditions.

We are privileged today to be afforded a firsthand experience of the craftsmanship involved in these traditions in our own **carpet weaving workshop**. Under the expert guidance of a team of Amazigh carpet weavers at not-for-profit The Anou, we'll each design and weave our own textile on a mini loom.

After our weaving session there's **free time** for independent exploration, a little shopping time, or maybe a hammam.

Meals: Breakfast



**Day 14** **Tuesday**



**Day 15** **Wednesday**



**Day 16** **Thursday**



**Day 17** **Friday**

### MEKNES

Riad d'Or

Another UNESCO World Heritage listed site features this morning, as we depart Fes to explore the **Roman ruins of Volubilis**, the Roman empire's furthest western point. The columns, arches and beautiful mosaics are quite extraordinary and the site continues to be excavated, with much left still to uncover. We'll enjoy a private guided tour of the ruins with a local expert.

Then we take a short drive to another imperial city, the laid back centre of Meknes. Lunch today is a special Moroccan delicacy – a camel burger! (There'll be an alternative for vegetarians, don't worry).

We'll enjoy a guided walking tour of **Meknes** making sure to include the souks which are full of the tiny studios of embroiderers, garment makers, braid, tassel and trim weavers, tailors and spinners, and shops crammed with threads, buttons, cloth and *djellabas*.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

### CASABLANCA

Barcelo d'Anfa

Continuing our journey west, we head to Morocco's capital city **Rabat**, home of Morocco's parliament and the royal family. A stunning mix of old and new, Rabat is home to some of the country's most famous and innovative architecture, and also one of the prettiest kasbahs, the Kasbah of the Oudayas, complete with a pirate look out over the Atlantic ocean and a 12<sup>th</sup> century traditional Andalusian garden. Within the kasbah's beautiful Andalusian garden is the excellent **National Museum of Jewellery & Adornment**, housing a marvellous collection of traditional costumes and jewellery from all over Morocco.

In the late afternoon we'll drive to **Casablanca** where we'll spend the final two nights of our tour. After a couple of single nights, it's lovely to settle into our 5 star hotel for a little luxury for two nights.

Meals: Breakfast

### CASABLANCA

Barcelo d'Anfa

Casablanca is Morocco's largest city and the country's economic centre. Its most famous landmark is the extraordinary **Hassan II mosque**, the largest in Morocco, and the only one open to non Muslims. Completed in 1993, it can accommodate a staggering 105,000 worshippers (25,000 indoors and another 80,000 in the massive courtyard outside), and displays a vast array of artisan handcrafts including *zellige* tiles, carved plaster, metalwork, woodwork, marble and painted surfaces. We'll enjoy a **private tour** of this incredible building and stunning example of Moroccan artisanship in our final excursion together.

This afternoon is **free time** for last minute shopping, final galleries or museums, or just to relax by the pool.

Tonight we have a chance to reflect on our remarkable time together at a special **farewell dinner**.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

### CASABLANCA

Sadly, our tour comes to an end today after breakfast. We'll pack up our memories and souvenirs, say our final fond farewells and head our separate ways.

We can assist you to book a transfer to the Casablanca international airport for your flight home, or even back to the Marrakech airport if you wish.

*NB: As this itinerary was developed a year ahead of departure, some further refinement may occur. We will always keep you fully informed regarding any changes to this itinerary.*

Meals: Breakfast

#### Inclusions:

- 16 nights/17 days accommodation (hotels, riads, a rustic kasbah homestay and a 'glamping' campsite)
- Arrival airport transfers
- Daily breakfasts, 6 lunches, 10 dinners (drinks not included)
- Transport: private air conditioned vehicle, camel, occasional taxi
- 6 hands on handcraft experiences
- Handcraft cooperative visits
- Entrance fees to cultural sites
- Services of a local English-speaking certified guide, retreat|recreate host, and driver
- Tipping of hotel/restaurant staff, porters etc on behalf of the group
- Water in the bus (bring a refillable bottle)
- \$50 donation per person to a local women's charity

#### Exclusions:

- International airfares
- Travel insurance
- Departure transfers
- Meals and drinks not specified in the itinerary
- Tips for guide & driver

#### Notes:

- Please read the Trip Notes thoroughly to understand the health & mobility requirements.
- The handcraft experiences on this tour are not formal workshops or classes with trained teachers. They're more about informal and personal experiences with local artisans and practitioners.