

MOROCCO HANDCRAFTS

ITINERARY 2027

31 March - 16 April
15 September – 1 October

retreat|recreate is delighted to offer these fabulous, socially responsible, small group women's 17-day textiles & 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, Meknes & 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 craftsmanship, explore multiple UNESCO World Heritage listed sites, cities and rural villages, and travel through stunning scenery including the desert and the ancient Atlas Mountains. Spend two nights in an ancient kasbah and a magical night under the stars in the Sahara. Join us for the trip of a lifetime!

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Day 1

Wednesday

MARRAKECH

Salaam aleikum! Welcome to Morocco!

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

Your tour begins with a **briefing meeting at 6pm (TBC)** where we'll run through the itinerary and you'll meet our local Moroccan guide and fellow travellers.

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

Meals: Dinner



Day 2

Thursday

MARRAKECH

Today, dive straight into your Moroccan handcrafts exploration with visits to **two of Marrakech's best textile and handcraft museums**.

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 the tour.

In the afternoon the delights continue as you enjoy your 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

This morning, head into the winding lanes of the Marrakech medina for another fabulous immersive experience. In the heart of the leather souk you'll meet an artisan who will guide you through the process of **making your own pair of babouches** (traditional Moroccan slippers). What a perfect handmade souvenir of your 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



Day 5 Sunday



Day 6 Monday



Day 7 Tuesday



Day 8 Wednesday

QUIRGANE

The road beckons! Today it's time to bid farewell to Marrakech, and head out of town. You'll very quickly find yourselves in the High Atlas Mountains travelling south through stunning scenery.

Your first destination is a **traditional Amazigh (Berber) home** nestled by a river in a small rural village. The charming and inspiring hostess will show the group around her house and productive garden, and you'll enjoy a delicious home cooked lunch on her terrace.

In the afternoon, continue your drive to **Ouirgane**, a picturesque Amazigh village in the heart of the **Toubkal National Park**. There'll be the opportunity to take a walk through the countryside, past local villages, to stretch your legs and admire the scenery.

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

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

AIT BEN HADDOU

Another day of once in a lifetime experiences awaits you 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 arrival we may enjoy a walking tour around the kasbah, or we may save this for the morning. On the walk we'll be sure to stop at a teahouse run by a local women's cooperative.

Tomorrow you'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 so you can break out all your favourite 70s tie dye designs.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

AIT BEN HADDOU

This morning you'll visit a local **women's carpet co-op** – there's the chance to meet some of the women and see demonstrations of spinning, carding, weaving and knotting. You'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.

This afternoon at a tiny handcrafts co-op you'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. You'll dye your scarves (the ones prepped last night) with pomegranate, turmeric or madder, depending on what's on offer at the time. Lunch will be at this co-op.

Note, at this venue:

- squat toilet only;
- sit on the floor for lunch.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

TAMNOUGALT

Leaving Ait Ben Haddou, we continue our journey, driving through the Atlas Mountains to **Tamnougalt**. Our destination is a 15th century kasbah in the Draa Valley, set in a lush palm oasis, and while it's rustic, it is a **highlight of the tour**. You'll meet the current owner of the kasbah (descendent of the village's original *caid*, or tribal chief), hear about local life in the village and the ongoing restoration works of this ancient kasbah.

The mudbrick building has few mod cons. Beds are mattresses on the floor, most rooms have no windows, and the building is dark and dusty 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. We spend two nights here. It's a fabulous, authentic experience, but you *must be physically able and prepared* to cope with this rustic homestay experience.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

TAMNOUGALT

Today is a relaxed day soaking up the slow kasbah life. Our host will lead a walking tour of the village, after which there'll be a **demonstration of traditional palm leaf mat weaving** and you can have a turn yourselves. (*Note that you will sit on the ground for the weaving and for lunch*).

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 there'll be the opportunity to rock the kasbah, with live Gnaoua music and dancing. (*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

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

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

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

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

Note: the single supplement does not apply tonight as the tents are all twin share. All solo travellers will be paired up.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

MIDELT

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 the **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 over the dunes by jeep if you prefer.

Your 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 you'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

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 you are able to experience the process and make a small coaster sized piece in your very own **zellige mosaic workshop**. The studio makes wheel thrown pots, dishes and tagines as well as zellige tiles – there's the opportunity to shop for beautiful ceramics if you wish.

Tonight you'll dine with a local family at their home.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

FES

Today you'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 the walking tour you'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 11th century. (If you're interested in buying leather goods in Morocco such as jackets, bags and footstools, this is a good opportunity).

Note, you will be on your feet all day today aside from at lunch.

Meals: Breakfast

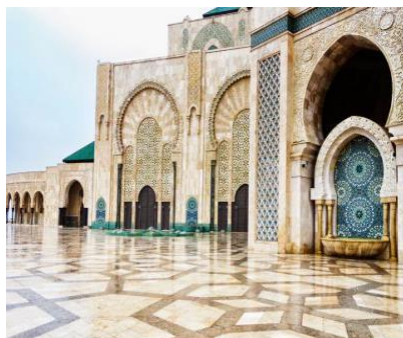
FES

As you've 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 a private **carpet weaving workshop**. Under the expert guidance of a team of Amazigh carpet weavers, you'll each design and weave your own textile on a mini loom.

After the weaving session there's **free time** for your own independent exploration, shopping time, or maybe a hammam.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 14 **Tuesday**

Day 15 **Wednesday**

Day 16 **Thursday**

Day 17 **Friday**

RABAT

This morning 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).

You'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*.

Continuing west, we head to Morocco's capital city **Rabat** and check into our lovely accommodation, ready to explore properly tomorrow.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

RABAT

The capital of **Rabat** is home to Morocco's parliament and the royal family. A stunning mix of old and new, Rabat is home to one of the prettiest kasbahs, the UNESCO World Heritage listed Kashbah of the Oudayas, complete with its pirate look out over the Atlantic ocean and a 12th century traditional Andalusian garden. Within this beautiful garden is a **museum housing a marvellous collection of traditional costumes and jewellery** from all over Morocco, which is well worth a look.

We will also visit the recently renovated and reopened historic Chellah, the site of an Islamic necropolis and ancient Roman ruins. It's another UNESCO World Heritage site, set in pretty garden surrounds famous for its large stork population.

Meals: Breakfast

CASABLANCA

This morning, drive to our final destination of Casablanca, 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 museums, or just to relax by the pool.

Tonight offers the chance to reflect on your remarkable trip at a special **farewell dinner**.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

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, at additional cost. We'll arrange this in the final couple of days on tour.

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

Meals: Breakfast

Price per person
Twin share: AUD \$8050
Single supplement: AUD \$2000

- 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
 - UNESCO World Heritage sites
 - Services of our local English-speaking certified guide, driver, and city guides
 - Tipping of hotel/restaurant staff, porters etc on behalf of the group
 - Water in the bus on travel days

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

- Notes:**
- The April/May tour is escorted by our guide and retreat|recreate host. The Sept/Oct tour is escorted by our guide only.
 - The handcraft experiences on this tour are not all classes with trained teachers. They're more about informal and personal experiences with local artisans and practitioners.

