

Northern Africa: Souks, Ksars and the Sahara

Morocco in Depth with Tunisia extension

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

Morocco 20 days | Tunisia 11 days
Departs April 2027
Cost to be confirmed

Tour Highlights

- The blue city of Chefchaouen
- Essaouira's bustling markets and fishing port
- Finding your way out of the Fez walled medina
- Marrakesh's tanning factories and souks
- Luxury desert camp stay
- Berber oasis villages with their distinctive troglodyte houses
- El Djem's huge Roman amphitheatre
- Kairouan's magnificent mosque



Northern Africa: Souks, Ksars and the Sahara



Tour overview

Mountains, deserts, and ancient cities make Morocco endlessly diverse, but it's the warmth of its people that our travellers remember most. Morocco has been home to the Berbers since the Paleolithic age and has been shaped over centuries by Romans, Arabs, and, most recently, the French.

This layered history shows in every detail—from Islamic mosques and madrassahs to art-deco facades, and locals fluent in both French and Arabic.

Our small group tour provides iconic experiences like wandering Marrakech's lively souks, Chefchaouen's blue-washed streets and the chaotic local culture of Fes. But we also take you beyond, to the remote villages of the Atlas Mountains, camping under the stars in the Sahara, and cooking a meal with local people. Experience unique, riad-style accommodation, where tiled courtyards and carved woodwork offer calm just steps away from the bustle of the medina.

Framed by the sparkling Mediterranean, Tunisia is a small country packed with history and natural beauty. Tunisia has been home to a diverse range of cultures, from the Berbers to the Romans to the Arabs. Each has left its distinct mark, from the troglodyte houses carved directly into sandstone, to Roman monuments like El Djem's huge amphitheatre and museums showcasing magnificent mosaics, to beautiful Islamic buildings such as Kairouan's ancient mosque, which played a key role in the Islamisation of North Africa.

From blue seas to sandy deserts, Tunisia is an underrated gem offering beautiful quality hotels and a vibrant cuisine that blends Mediterranean, Arab, and French influences. Join us on an unforgettable journey to explore charming villages, dramatic canyons, oasis palm groves, and the world's greatest desert and uncover the beauty that makes Northern Africa truly extraordinary.



Activity rating: Moderate

You must be capable of walking up to 8,000 steps daily; occasionally ascending 3-4 flights of steps; standing at attractions for 1-2 hours; boarding and disembarking transport unaided and handling your own luggage.

MOROCCO IN DEPTH

Day 1: CASABLANCA

On arrival, we'll be transferred to our hotel in Casablanca to relax and freshen up. In the afternoon, we'll have our Welcome Meeting, followed by a short city tour. We'll visit the Hassan II Mosque, featuring the tallest minaret in the world (210 metres), the Mohammed V Square and the fashionable Ain Diab Corniche district. Our dinner this evening is at an iconic local restaurant. (Ricks Café, made famous by the movie Casablanca, subject to availability). Overnight: Casablanca **D**

Day 2: CASABLANCA – RABAT – TANGIER

This morning, we'll drive to Rabat, the capital of Morocco and one of its imperial cities. We'll visit the Kasbah of the Oudayas, constructed during the Almohad dynasty's reign (12th century). Then we'll visit the Mohammed V Mausoleum—resting place of Morocco's modern monarchs—followed by Hassan Tower, an imposing minaret started in 1195 and never completed. After lunch, we'll travel onwards to Tangier, a breezy hilltop port that is Morocco's gateway between Africa and Europe. Overnight: Tangier **B/D**

Day 3: TANGIER – CHEFCHAOUEN

Explore Tangier this morning, with its whitewashed medina, faded art-deco cafés, and both Grand and Petit “Soccos” (square/marketplace). We'll visit the American Legation (museum) and Mendoubia Gardens, then drive to Cape Sparte, where the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean – known to the Greeks and Romans as the “Cape of the Vines”. We'll continue to the photogenic city of Chefchaouen, with its maze of blue doors and cobbled alleys. During our walking tour of the town, we'll pass the impressive Kasbah, which dates back to the 15th Century. We'll arrive at our hotel with time to freshen up before dinner. Overnight: Chefchaouen **B/D**

Day 4: AKCHOUR

After the first few days of bustling cities, today is a chance to reconnect with nature on a day trip to Akchour. This stunning gorge area is one of our local favourites, with its emerald pools and shaded river trails leading to a series of waterfalls. We'll take a hike along the river, beneath a lush green forest that feels a world away. (Take your swimmers if you are keen for a swim). After a relaxing lunch in this peaceful area, we'll return to Chefchaouen with time to wander the streets at your leisure. Overnight: Chefchaouen **B/L/D**

Day 5: CHEFCHAOUEN – FES

After a relaxed start to our morning, we'll transfer to Fes, the spiritual capital of Morocco and one of the country's oldest cities. Our travellers love Fes for its authenticity, where local life is happening (albeit chaotically) all around you. The drive is around 4 hours, and we'll arrive in the late afternoon for a three-night stay. Overnight: Fes **B/D**

Day 6: FES

Today, we'll explore this fascinating city! We'll start at the entrance to the largest royal palace in Morocco, then climb for a panoramic view over the ancient medina. We'll walk through Fes El Bali, a medieval medina that has remained unchanged for centuries, and learn about the traditional ceramics crafts for which Fes is renowned. Visit a madrasa (Koranic school), then the Al-Karaouine Mosque and University—founded in 859 and cited as the world's first university. We'll finish our day at the leather Souq, the oldest leather tannery in the world, dating back at least nine centuries. Overnight: Fes **B/D**

Day 7: FES – MEKNES – VOLUBILIS – FES

Today we'll drive to Meknes, one of the oldest cities in the Kingdom. The Sultan Moulay Ismail transformed Meknes into his imperial capital, constructing grand palaces and massive fortifications, reminiscent of the French royal palace at Versailles. Bab el-Mansour is the showpiece gate, completed in 1732, faced with green-and-white tiles and anchored by massive marble columns. Next, we'll visit the UNESCO-listed Roman ruins of Volubilis, a Berber and Roman village dating back to the 3rd century BC. The sprawling ruins feature elegant mosaics, a triumphal arch, a basilica, a forum, as well as remnants of everyday life such as ancient olive presses. Overnight: Fes **B/D**

Day 8: FES – IFRANE – MIDELT – ERFOUD

Leaving Fes, we'll travel to the heart of the Sahara Desert through the Middle Atlas Mountains. It's a long travel day, passing through small, remote towns. Our first stop is in Ifrane, a charming village and ski resort famous for its European-style houses and Alpine climate (the lowest temperature in Africa was recorded here, -24 °C in 1935). Our next stop is Midelt, a sandswept Berber town, nestled between the imposing Middle and High Atlas mountain ranges. We'll continue past many Amazigh (Berber) villages along the Ziz Valley to our final destination, Erfoud. Overnight: Erfoud **B/D**

Day 9: ERFOUD – RISSANI – MERZOUGA

Today we'll embark on a 4x4 Jeep tour through the magnificent Sahara Desert. Our first stop is at Rissani to visit the Moulay Ali Chérif Mausoleum, the mausoleum of the first founder of the Alaouite Dynasty. The Tafilalet region is known for its Ksars (fortified villages), and we'll stop to explore their ancient architecture. We'll visit the Rissani souk to meet wandering traders, nomads, Berbers and Arabic desert dwellers. Continue to El Khamlia to enjoy a typical lunch, known locally as the Berber Pizza. Enjoy a sunset camel ride to our charming desert camp late in the afternoon (or take a 4WD if the camel ride is not for you). Overnight: Merzouga Desert Camp **B/L/D**

**Note: The luxury desert camp is situated amongst the dunes and features bedroom tents and a dining tent. The bedroom tents are raised off the sand, featuring wood flooring, en-suite bathrooms, a shower, and a flushing toilet. Each tent contains a quality bed, mirror, rugs and seating.*

Day 10: MERZOUGA – TINGHIR – DADES

Wake up to the dawn colours of the desert and enjoy breakfast at our desert camp before we continue our drive through the changing desert landscapes. We'll stop at Todra Gorge, a 300m wall carved deep into the High Atlas Mountains. The pinkish-orange limestone hues create a breathtaking landscape, and the canyon is popular among hikers and climbers. Nearby Tinghir is a gorgeous 40km oasis boasting one of the country's most extensive palm groves. We'll continue winding through the stunning desert and villages, with the expansive Jebel Sarhro lunar landscape as our backdrop, en route to the Dades. This expanse of untouched Moroccan countryside, known as the Valley of the Figs, is our resting place for the night. Overnight: Dades **B/D**



Day 11: MERZOUGA – TINGHIR – DADES

We set out on another spectacular drive today, passing hundreds of kasbahs scattered across the valleys. Our first stop is Kelaat M'Gouna, famed for its fragrant rose cultivation. From there, we continue to Ouarzazate, home to the impressive Taourirt Kasbah, one of Morocco's finest. Our final destination is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ait Benhaddou, a fortified village. This ksar, built from earthen clay and ringed by defensive walls, is an outstanding example of pre-Saharan architecture—and is an iconic landscape immortalised in many films. (Please note: the visit involves up to 200 steps). Overnight: Ait Ben Haddou **B/D**

Day 12: AIT BEN HADDOU – IMLIL

Today, we'll cross the High Atlas Mountains along Tizi-n-Tichka Pass to Imlil, a charming village dominated by Djebel Toubkal, the highest summit in North Africa, at 4167 metres. The village of Imlil sits at an altitude of 1,500 metres, making it an ideal starting point for hiking and trekking in the High Atlas Mountains. The vast countryside is covered with green oaks, cypresses and other vegetation typical of the Atlas. We'll arrive in the early afternoon and have free time before dinner. Overnight: Imlil **B/D**

Day 13: IMLIL

Today we'll trek together with a local guide, offering us the chance to meet the villagers and experience the wonderful Berber hospitality. It's a rough track and you're likely to meet donkeys and locals along the way – this is authentic village life. We'll visit a Berber home for lunch and traditional mint tea. Wander around the village's alleyways before taking a different trail back to Imlil. We'll pass through a forest trail to view the interesting irrigation systems flowing into the fertile valley. Overnight: Imlil **B/L/D**

Day 14: IMLIL – MARRAKECH

After a leisurely breakfast, we'll drive to colourful and fascinating Marrakech, once described by Winston Churchill as the "Paris of the Sahara". We'll stop in town for lunch before visiting the Majorelle Gardens and Yves Saint Laurent Museum. The gardens are beautiful and took French painter Jacques Majorelle (1886–1962) forty years of passion and dedication to create. Dinner is at your leisure tonight. Overnight: Marrakech **B/L**

Day 15: MARRAKECH

Experience lively Marrakech on our city tour today. We'll visit the Koutoubia Mosque, explore the Bahia Palace with its detailed Moroccan and Islamic design, and see the Saadian Tombs, known for their fine decoration from the late 1500s. Take in the buzz of activity at Jemaa El Fna Square where storytellers, musicians, snake charmers, and peddlers mix. Finally, our guide will navigate us through the maze of stalls in the bustling souks of the old Medina. It's a feast for the senses, with a cacophony of sounds, smells, and sights. Afterwards, there'll be some time to explore on our own. We recommend heading to one of the bars at the top of the square for an amazing city view. Overnight: Marrakech. **B/L**

Day 16: MARRAKECH

Moroccan cuisine has a remarkable diversity of influences, and today we'll learn about them with a hands-on cooking class. It's a fun culinary experience, introducing you to some of the most famous Moroccan dishes as well as a few local secrets – and best of all, we get to enjoy our creations for lunch. In the afternoon, return to the old medina to explore on your own or do some shopping. Alternatively, you can enjoy a traditional hammam (Middle Eastern steam bath and scrub). Your guide will assist you with planning. Overnight: Marrakech **B/L/D**

Day 17: MARRAKECH – ESSAOUIRA

Leaving Marrakech behind, we head towards the coast. Essaouira is the main surfing destination in Morocco, a beautiful and easily navigable seaside port city. It was originally founded by the Romans and inhabited by the Portuguese during the 17th century. The area is also famous for the Argan tree, which only grows on the western coast of Morocco. Argan tree oil is used in skin and hair care preparations, salad dressings, and amlou (prepared with almonds and honey to make a delicious paste), and we'll visit a women's argan oil co-operative en route. There'll be time for a walk to soak up the coastal charm before dinner. Essaouira **B/D**

Day 18: ESSAOUIRA

Essaouira is distinguished by its multicultural character, a legacy of the Portuguese, French, and Jewish populations that once called it home. We'll tour the city today, beginning at the UNESCO-listed walled medina. Its well-preserved, late 18th-century fortified layout is a prime example of European military architecture in North Africa. The mellow atmosphere and winding streets, lined with colourful shops, whitewashed houses, and heavy old wooden doors, make it a wonderful place to explore. Today's lunch is at Les Domaines du Val d'Argan, a stunning vineyard that combines French winemaking techniques with the charm of the Moroccan coastal region. On return, there'll be free time to explore the port with its blue fishing boats, and dinner (if you can fit it in). Overnight: Essaouira **B/L**

Day 19: ESSAOUIRA – EL JADIDA – CASABLANCA

This morning we'll travel to Safi, known for its 16th-century Portuguese fortress, colourful ceramics, and busy sardine port. Strolling its old quarter offers a glimpse of daily life along the Atlantic coast. We'll continue to Oualidia, another charming coastal town. Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and a saltwater lagoon on the other, Oualidia has a certain magic about its constantly changing seascape. Our final stop is El Jadida, a UNESCO-listed port city with well-preserved Portuguese architecture, atmospheric ramparts, and sweeping sea views, before we return to Casablanca. We'll enjoy a special farewell dinner at a local restaurant tonight. Overnight: Casablanca **B/D**

Day 20: CASABLANCA – TUNIS or RETURN HOME

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your journey home, or join our 10-night Tunisia extension. The flight from Casablanca to Tunis is approximately 3 hours, and we'll arrive in the early evening. **B/L**



TUNISIA EXTENSION

11-day Tunisia Extension (cost to be confirmed)

Day 1: TUNIS, TUNISIA

The modern city of Tunis extends along the Mediterranean coastal plains into the surrounding hills. It's a city of contrasts, with modern office buildings, shopping malls and European cafes, the French colonial architecture of Ville Nouvelle, and the dynamic Arab souks of the old Medina. We begin our journey here with a Welcome Dinner. Overnight: Tunis **B/D**

Day 2: CARTHAGE DAYTRIP

This morning we'll visit the Bardo Museum. Housed in the wing of an old biblical palace, this vibrant archaeological museum is famous for its collection of Roman mosaics. It also boasts superb ancient statues and valuable objects from the prehistoric, Punic, and Muslim periods. Next, we'll drive to the UNESCO-listed archaeological site, Carthage. Founded by the Phoenicians in the 9th century BC, Carthage grew into Rome's greatest rival before being destroyed and later rebuilt as one of the empire's most dazzling provincial capitals. Finally, we'll return to the medina of Tunis, where winding alleys, vaulted passageways, and ornate doorways frame lively souks and colourful markets much as they have for over 500 years. Overnight: Tunis **B/D**

Day 3: DOUGGA DAY TRIP

Today we'll travel to Dougga (Ancient Thugga), a vast archaeological site spread across 60 acres on a hillside 2,000 feet above the plain. Remarkably well-preserved, its Roman theatre is still used today for concerts. Continue on to Thuccabor and the Ben Ismail Family Reserve in Medjez El Bab, where we'll enjoy a fresh lunch made from local produce and gain insight into Tunisia's olive industry—complete with a guided tasting. We'll return to Tunis for dinner (if you can fit it in). Overnight: Tunis **B/L/D**

Day 4: TUNIS – OUDHNA – ZAGHOUAN – KAIROUAN

This morning we'll travel to Oudhna (ancient Uthina), a well-preserved Roman amphitheatre built in the 2nd century that once seated up to 16,000 spectators. We'll then visit Zaghuan, lying at the foot of the Djebel Zaghouan mountain, it is best known for its ancient Roman water temple and aqueduct that once supplied Carthage. Continue to UNESCO-listed Kairouan, the holy Islamic city founded in 670. The town played a key role in the Islamisation of North Africa, and it continues to be a holy city whose medina and monuments occupy a special place in Tunisian heritage. Overnight: Kairouan **B/D**

Day 5: KAIROUAN – SBEITLA – TOZEUR

The Great Mosque of Sidi Okba in Kairouan, first founded in 670, is one of the world's oldest and most important Islamic monuments. Rebuilt in 836 under the Aghlabid dynasty, it reflects Kairouan's role as a prosperous provincial capital and stands today as a symbol of the city's religious and architectural heritage. After exploring this fascinating site, we'll continue to Sbeitla, a well-preserved Roman city famed for its Capitoline temples and extensive ruins. Finally, arrive in Tozeur, an oasis town on the edge of the Sahara, known for its vast palm groves, golden desert scenery, and distinctive brickwork architecture. It is sheltered by more than 400,000 palm trees producing a world-renowned date variety known as Deglet Nour, or "fingers of light". Overnight: Tozeur **B/D**

Day 6: TOZEUR – CHOTT EL JERID – MATMATA – DJERBA

We'll begin our day with a visit to the Medina of Tozeur and the Dar Cherait Museum before continuing towards Matmata. Along the way, cross the striking Chott El Jerid salt pans, a vast sunbaked expanse where the hard crust of salt hides underground water sources. In Matmata, discover the remarkable troglodyte dwellings—subterranean homes carved into soft rock with central courtyards sunk like craters. (You may recognise them as the location for the Star Wars movies). Enjoy lunch in a traditional troglodyte house, then continue to Djerba, arriving via the historic Roman road. Overnight: Djerba **B/L/D**

Day 7: DJERBA

Today we'll explore Djerba Island, beginning with a visit to the Guellala village on the island's south coast, famous for its pottery. We'll visit Erriadh, a village made up of a Jewish minority who have lived on the island for more than 100 years. The Ghriba Synagogue is the oldest outside of Israel and holds one of the world's oldest Torah scrolls. Nearby Houmet Souk, literally translated as "The Market neighbourhood", is known for its lively souks, where colourful stalls brim with local handicrafts, spices, and traditional clothing. It's a wonderful place to stroll, with its narrow streets lined with whitewashed buildings adorned with blue shutters. We'll have free time this afternoon to enjoy a swim in the lovely hotel pool, or a walk around the hotel's local streets to see the fabulous street art. Overnight: Djerba **B/D**

Day 8: DJERBA – TUNIS – HAMMAMET

It's an early start today, as we transfer to Djerba airport for the 1-hour flight back to Tunis. On arrival, we'll visit Sidi Bou Said – a charming hilltop town just outside Tunis. Wander its blue-and-white streets, browse art galleries, and sip mint tea at a café overlooking the Gulf of Tunisia (Try the bambalouni – the Tunisian doughnut dipped in sugar). We'll visit the elegant Baron d'Erlanger Palace, now a museum celebrating North African music and art, and Dar El Annabi, an 18th-century home that showcases traditional Tunisian family life and architecture. Enjoy a lunch of fresh local produce, with panoramic views of the Mediterranean. Afterwards, we'll drive to the seaside town of Hammamet. Overnight: Hammamet **B/L/D**

Day 9: HAMMAMET – EL JEM – MONASTIR – HAMMAMET

Today we'll drive to El Jem, which has one of the world's largest and most spectacular Roman Amphitheatres – a tour highlight. Built in 238 AD, the Amphitheatre can hold up to 35,000 spectators. This monument illustrates the grandeur and extent of the Roman Empire. We'll continue to Monastir, a coastal town famed for its 9th-century Ribat fortress and Great Mosque. We'll explore the historic Ribat and visit the striking mausoleum of Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's first president, returning to Hammamet in the afternoon. Overnight: Hammamet **B/D**

Day 10: KERKOUANE DAYTRIP

We'll begin our morning with a walking tour of Hammamet, Tunisia's original seaside resort town. With its low-rise buildings and streets lined with orange trees, and fine, sandy beaches, it retains a relaxed atmosphere. Then we'll drive to Kerkouane, a Carthaginian archaeological site on the seafront, remarkable as the only surviving example of a Punic town not rebuilt by the Romans. Your afternoon is free to relax and enjoy our beautiful hotel. Our final dinner is a treat, featuring a delicious local meal and a cultural show. Overnight: Hammamet **B/D**

Day 11: HAMMAMET – DEPARTURE

After breakfast, we'll depart for the 1-hour drive back to Tunis airport for your flight home. **B**





Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are sample hotels on this tour:

Hotel La Doge, Casablanca
www.hotelledoge.com

Riyad El Yacout, Fez
www.riadelyacout.com

Ksah Inghia Riad, Ait Ben Haddou
www.ksarighnda.com/en/

Hotel Dar El Jeld, Tunis
www.dareljeld.com

Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers on most tours, and often fewer
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is inclusive and enjoyable, while prioritising your safety. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A \$500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

For more information:



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