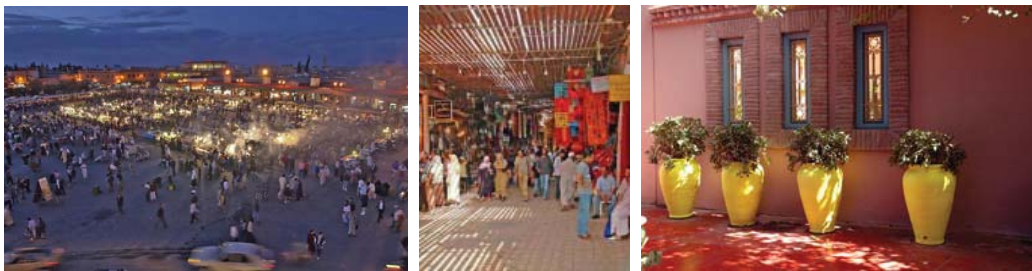




**9 nights and 10 days including Ascent of Jebel Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak**

**Day 1 – Arrival in Marrakech and transfer to 5\* Riad accommodation**

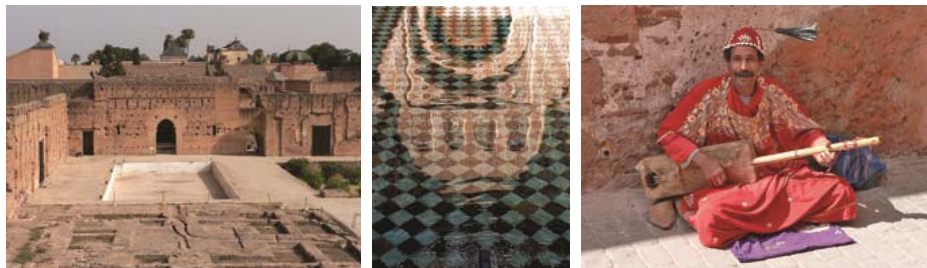
Your private air-conditioned transport and bi-lingual driver meet you at the airport. Your Riad is located in the heart of the medina of Marrakech. Dinner will be provided at the 5\* Riad on arrival.



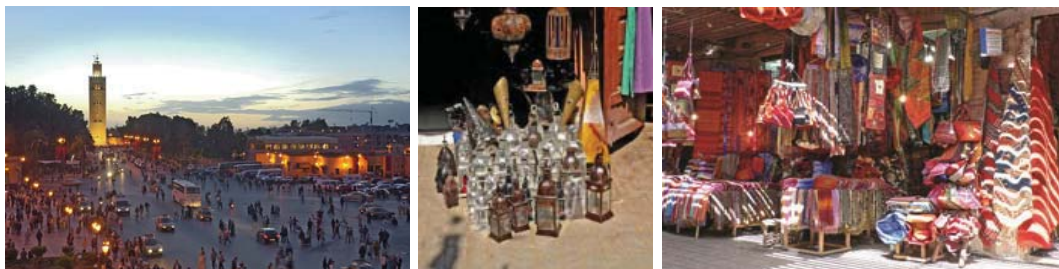
**Day 2 – Guided Tour of Marrakech**

After breakfast your guide will meet you to take you on a day walking tour of the city's main sights.

Marrakech, founded over 1,000 years ago, is also known as the 'red city', from the natural red-ochre pigment that colours its walls and buildings, and is perhaps the most famous city in Morocco. A combination of the old (the Medina) and the new (Guéliz), Marrakech is an exotic cocktail of sights and sounds.



There are many historical places of interest to see including the extraordinary Jemaa el-Fna, the main square in Marrakech. In the evenings, the square becomes a venue for alfresco eating and entertainment with troupes of costumed acrobats, storytellers, magicians, dancers, and semi-mystical Gnawa musicians. The souks offer a vast array of merchandise and an insight into a way of life unchanged in centuries.



### Day 3 – Morning Hot Air Balloon Excursion – Afternoon in the ‘Desert’ on Camelback

Marrakech benefits from being located on a vast, flat plain which provides a perfect environment for hot air ballooning. You are collected at your Riad around daybreak and driven by 4x4 across the local countryside to reach the balloon launch site to witness the team set up the balloon. After a full safety briefing you lift off for your flight. Balloon flights are naturally dependent on the weather but cancellations are very rare indeed. Flights are not operated in August.



Your next stop is a site about 30 km Southwest of Marrakech, to the arid area of Agafay, also known as the Marrakech desert. After leaving the main road, your driver will follow a rough track for a short while, and then arrive at an oasis called “La Pause”, located at the edge of a small river. If you look south, the majesty of the High Atlas Mountains will be apparent.



Take time to look around the property and then relax over lunch, served under Berber-style tents. Enjoy an action-packed afternoon of camel riding, off road buggies and mountain biking across the gently undulating hills.

Return to Marrakech and the 5\* Riad. Dinner may be taken at leisure at any number of excellent Moroccan restaurants in the Medina.



#### Day 4 – Cooking the Moroccan Way – Then transfer to the High Atlas Mountains

Early morning departure from the riad to enjoy browsing and ingredient-shopping in the calm of the spice souks before starting a cookery class.

You each have your own workstation and equipment, and follow step-by-step instructions to prepare that day's dish. In a typical workshop, you will learn how to make a main course as well as a Moroccan appetiser or salad (for example, eggplant or roasted green peppers with tomatoes). When the class has finished, it's time to savor the result of your labours.



After lunch, you depart for Imlil in the High Atlas Mountains, approx. 90 minutes transfer from Marrakech. Your accommodation tonight (and night 6) is the Kasbah du Toubkal; situated on a hilltop with commanding views of the surrounding valley, the Kasbah was built as a summer palace for the Pasha El Glaoui. It is now a wonderful place to experience Berber hospitality. Dinner is included.



The Kasbah du Toubkal has been heavily involved in sharing its prosperity with the local mountain villages, sponsoring much-needed health and educational projects.

#### Day 5 – Trek to the base camp of Jebel Toubkal

At 4167m above sea level, Jebel Toubkal is Morocco's and North Africa's highest peak. Set in a region of dramatic mountains, beautifully terraced valleys and adobe villages perched precipitously on hillsides; Toubkal is an exciting and rewarding climb for weekend walkers and seasoned trekkers alike. The ascent requires no technical climbing experience. It's worth noting that Toubkal was only first climbed in 1923!

After (a not-too-early) breakfast, you start the first leg of your summit of Toubkal, via a steady but long ascent from the Kasbah du Toubkal, to the base camp refuge of Toubkal, at an altitude of about 3200m. Total trekking time is 5 hours. You should reach the refuge well before sundown. Dinner is included.

#### **Day 6 – Trek to the summit of Jebel Toubkal – gaze out to the Sahara - descend to the Kasbah du Toubkal**

After breakfast, you will make an early start to ensure the best weather and panoramas from the summit. Walking at a slow pace, respecting the altitude, and making regular stops, you should expect to reach the summit in around 3.5 hours. The first part of the climb is steep and rocky; this then evens out before the last hour of steep slopes take you to the summit.



The views and the sense of achievement at reaching the roof of North Africa make the summit a special place, with the whole of the South of Morocco laid out before you.

After enjoying the views and capturing the moment on camera, you'll be trekking down the slopes and navigating over the boulders, in total descending for about 2-2.5 hours, before enjoying a well-deserved hot lunch at the refuge base camp.

After lunch, it's downhill all the way to the comfort of the Kasbah du Toubkal, following the previous day's route up. This should take no more than 4.5 hours, with rest stops. At the Kasbah enjoy an indulgent session in the hammam before dinner (included), or simply put your feet up.

#### **Day 7 – From the mountains to the beach, Essaouira**

After breakfast your driver will take you to the relaxed, coastal town of Essaouira, approx. 250km from the Kasbah du Toubkal. The journey time is approx. 4 hours, with a short stop.

Essaouira is an 18<sup>th</sup> Century fortified town, formerly a Portuguese stronghold, enclosed by medieval battlements and facing a cluster of rocky offshore islands. Its whitewashed and blue-shuttered medina buildings, wood (Thuya) workshops and art galleries, boat-builders and sardine fishermen all provide a colourful contrast to the urban feel of Marrakech. Photographic opportunities are plenty! Many visitors to Essaouira are drawn by the wind that provides ideal conditions for windsurfing and kite surfing.

On arrival at lunchtime, and after checking in at your Riad, you may wish to eat at one of the many fish stalls near to the port where the morning's catch is on display and cooked right in front of you.

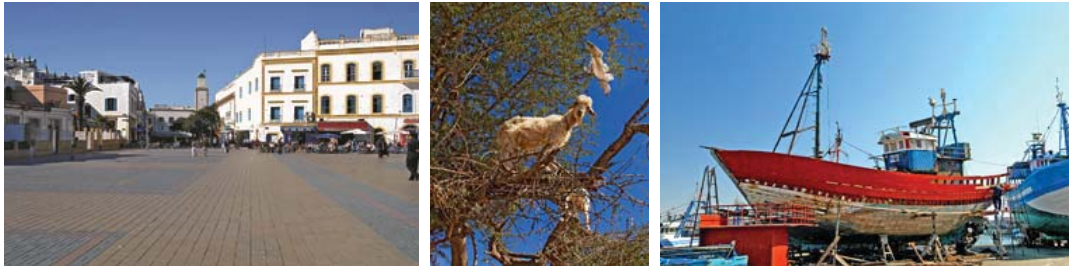
After lunch your guide will take you on a tour of this charming town. Explore the port, the lively souk, the traffic-free medina, and the ramparts. An 18th century synagogue may still be visited, testimony to the town's strong Jewish heritage. Your evening is spent at your own leisure.



#### **Day 8 – Essaouira**

After breakfast, you will saddle up for half a day's horse-riding, which is the perfect way to see the surrounding countryside of Essaouira and the beauty of the huge expanse of beach.

The half-day trek follows the coast towards Sidi Kaouki (a surfers' beach south of Essaouira), where you stop at 'Le Grotte' (or The Cave), a secluded surf spot, for lunch. Here you have the option to relax and swim before you make the return journey to Essaouira.



On the return to Essaouira you spend the rest of the day at leisure, and if you haven't already had the chance to enjoy a traditional Hammam. Night at your Riad. Your evening is spent at your own leisure.



#### **Day 9 – Essaouira – transfer to Marrakech**

After breakfast another chance to enjoy the wide golden sands! You have a surfing lesson of two hours to enjoy and the option to stay in the water and keep surfing afterwards, once you master the basics.

The transfer back to Marrakech will take approx. 3 hours, with a short stop. There's still time to visit the souks in Marrakech for some last-minute browsing of artisans workshops and to pick up a bargain handicraft.

Check-in at the Riad prior to a farewell dinner at a sleek, modern Moroccan restaurant in the new town of Marrakech.

#### **Day 10 – Transfer to Marrakech airport**

After breakfast, you will be collected to make the short transfer to the airport for your flights home.