**STRAIGHT talk**

We want to make sure you’re on the right trip and that you have the best experience possible. Every Backroads trip is unique and this one is no exception.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

While our hotels are some of the finest in Morocco, some tend to be in fairly isolated areas, removed from the conveniences of a cosmopolitan city. Though part of their charm, it also means that when things break, it may take some time to get them repaired. Service standards can be a bit different here and you may encounter the occasional person unfamiliar with the concept of "service with a smile."

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**DAY 1**

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 9:30 a.m. in front of the main entrance of the Marrakech train station, located on Avenue Hassan II in Marrakech, Morocco. Please arrive wearing comfortable walking shoes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today’s walk (your luggage will be transported to our first night’s accommodations).

**LATE TO THE TRIP START? See “Arriving & Departing” for more information.**

**SHUTTLE TO TAMESLOHT** 30 Minutes

**TAMESLOHT & RIAD GUIDED VISIT** 1½ Hours

**SHUTTLE TO OUCHFIL** 45 Minutes

**WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:**

Hidden Pathway to Dam Route: 4.5 Miles * (1,700’ elevation gain)

Hidden Pathway to Lake Route: 5.5 miles (1,900’)

*with shuttle

Welcome to Morocco! After meeting in Marrakech we take a quick shuttle out of town in four-wheel-drive Land Rovers, ideal for helping us navigate the rough terrain en route to Tamesloht. Surrounded by olive groves, this 16th-century hamlet became influential thanks to its olive oil production and agricultural activities. The village is rough around the edges, reminding us that Morocco is still a developing nation—albeit one that is very rich in history and character.

We visit a riad (a traditional Moroccan home built around a central courtyard) belonging to Moulay Hafid. (Moulay is a title given in honor to Moroccans who are the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed.) Our local guide and longtime acquaintance, Lionel, takes us on a tour of the home, which is beautifully adorned with intricate carvings, inlaid wood and decorative tiles. We then sit down for a refreshing cup of mint tea while Lionel gives us an introduction to Muslim religion and culture.

Following our visit we shuttle to Ouchfil for a Berber picnic of local specialties along with spectacular views of the
valley and the Atlas Mountains. After lunch, set out for a scenic walk into the canyon overlooking the N’Fiss river and the Atlas Mountains, accompanied by local friends.

Our destination this afternoon is Domaine de la Roseraie, a charming hotel rich in regional flavor, surrounded by a battlement of mountains and landscaped with fragrant gardens. After a full day, take some time to relax with a stroll along the grounds or a dip in the pool. Then follow candles and flaming torches through the rose garden to the hotel restaurant, where we sit down to dinner together. *Lodging: Domaine de la Roseraie*

**DAY 2**

**SHUTTLE TO TIRFISL 20 Minutes**

**WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:**
- Tirfistl Route: 4.1 Miles (1,900' elevation gain)
- Assif Zigzaoune Route: 6.1 Miles (2,100')
- Goat Path Route: 10 Miles (2,300')

**SHUTTLE TO LA ROSERAIE 45 Minutes**

This morning we hop back in our Land Rovers and journey deep into the High Atlas for an up-close encounter with traditional Berber culture. Populating parts of Northern Africa, the indigenous Berber people have largely assimilated into Arab culture, yet they maintain many of their own distinct dialects and customs. We set out from the picturesque perched village of Tirfistl with our guide at the helm.

Our routes takes us across a river, through gardens and olive groves, then along narrow walled paths to a village hidden behind Toubkal, the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains. Further on, we’re treated to views of the broad river valley, crosshatched with irrigation canals, against a backdrop of the blue-gray hills to the east. Donkeys, goats and pedestrians are the sole traffic we’ll likely encounter as we make our way from one sunbaked earthen village to the next. Follow a path uphill to a colorful settlement of adobe buildings where we’re welcomed into the home of a Berber family. Reclining on cushions, we sip mint tea before sharing a traditional lunch of homemade tagine (a Moroccan stew named after the pot in which it is cooked), couscous, freshly baked bread and locally grown nuts and olives.

On your way back, take in more sweeping views of jagged snowcapped crests, clustered hamlets on steep slopes and an agricultural mosaic of wheat, clover and onion fields.

Back at the hotel, locals treat us to music and dance before we dine in the tranquil courtyard. *Lodging: Domaine de la Roseraie*

**DAY 3**

**SHUTTLE TO VAL D’ARGAN 4 Hours**

**BREADBASKET OF ESSAOUIRA HIKE 2.8 Miles**
( Minimal elevation gain)

**SHUTTLE TO ESSAOUIRA 45 Minutes**

**ESSAOUIRA GUIDED WALK 1½ Hours**

Today we leave the mountains behind and head toward the coast. Whether it’s the foothills of the Atlas Mountains or the windswept plains near the coast, there’s a stark beauty to the landscape of Morocco. Taken at face value, the scenery might initially seem empty or monotonous because the colors are often the same—a series of earthy tones. But look closer. There’s variation that’s subtle but significant. An expansiveness so stunning that it’s vibrant and alive.

As we make our way toward the Atlantic, you’ll begin to see and feel a distinct change in the environment. The rolling hills and whitewashed houses are a stark contrast to the jagged peaks and earth-toned adobe buildings we’ve left behind. Along the way we stop for a wine tasting and lunch at Val d’Argan.
In southwestern Morocco, the argan tree grows wild. For centuries, a rare and precious amber-hued oil has been harvested and extracted from the nut of this tree for its healing properties. We make a stop near the city of Ounagh to better understand the process of making argan products and to taste some argan oil, used by Berber women for centuries in both food and traditional medicines. The word has gotten out and the oil is now highly sought after the world over for its nutritive, cosmetic and medicinal properties. It is widely believed to help heal scars, relieve rheumatic pain and fight wrinkles. It also tastes delicious on salads and can be mixed with ground almonds and honey to make a scrumptious breakfast spread called *amlou*.  

Our final destination today is Essaouira, originally a 16th-century Portuguese stronghold called Mogador, "the Prince's City." In ancient times this area was the haunt of the Phoenicians and Carthaginians who came to trade perfumes, silk and spices for ostrich feathers and gold. Essaouira's well-preserved medina, or ancient Arab city, has been a World Heritage site since 2001.

We head out on a guided sunset stroll within Essaouira's crenellated ramparts, revealing narrow streets full of white homes trimmed with cheery blue doors and window frames. Once a favored hangout of Jimi Hendrix and Cat Stevens, this city has a wonderfully easygoing feel, which you'll discover as we amble from the cannon-studded city walls to the quayside. Perhaps some handcrafted silver jewelry or a finely woven carpet will catch your eye in one of the shops.

Our home for the next two nights is the distinctive Heure Bleue Palais, which welcomes us with uniquely decorated guest rooms and a heated rooftop swimming pool boasting spectacular views of the city and port. If you’d like to try one of the country’s oldest rituals, consider the hotel’s hammam, a traditional Moroccan bathhouse. (Spa treatments are not included in the trip price. Advance reservations are recommended.)

This evening we dine on French-Moroccan cuisine at the lively L'*Heure Bleue*. *Lodging: Heure Bleue Palais*

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**DAY 4**

**SHUTTLE TO BIN SLIMAN** 45 Minutes

**WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:**
- Kasbah to Canyon Route: 2 Miles *(300’ elevation gain)*
- Old Kasbah Route: 3 Miles *(500’)*
- Kasbah to the Village Route: 3.7 miles *(1,000’)*

**SHUTTLE TO ESSAOUIRA** 50 Minutes

*with shuttle*

This morning we drive out of Essaouira to take advantage of some of our favorite scenery in the region. Head out on foot across undulating terrain speckled with wheat fields and olive groves. Pay special attention as we pass native argan trees—you may see dromedaries seeking shade underneath or even a goat foraging for fruit in the highest branches!

Enjoy views of the coast before hiking into a canyon to a hilltop village with a koranic school overlooking the canyon. Then break for a refreshing lunch at a lovely beachfront restaurant, the L'Océan Vagabond. After lunch, take some time to explore the town of Essaouira, an ideal place to find traditional Moroccan markets and shops in search of the perfect souvenir. The town's eclectic populace—from traditionally dressed women who rarely show even their hands, to young hip beach bums who practically show it all—is indicative of its tolerance of diverse lifestyles and beliefs.

If you're looking for a bit of authentic Moroccan adornment, have a local artist decorate your skin with...
henna tattoos before dinner—don’t worry, they’re just temporary! Tonight we dine by candlelight at La Table de Madada. *Lodging: Heure Bleue Palais*

**DAY 5**

**SHUTTLE TO OUASSANE COUNTRYSIDE** 30 Minutes

**CAP SIM COASTAL ROUTE** 2.8 Miles (400’ elevation gain)

**DROMEDARY RIDING** 1 Hour

**SHUTTLE TO JARDINS DE LA VILLA MAROC** 45 Minutes

**SHUTTLE TO MARRAKECH** 3½ Hours

Today we bid farewell to Essaouira as we head southward for a dramatic hike on the Ouassane Peninsula, along a spectacular stretch of the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Our route takes us past La Grotte, a secret surf spot, and along sand dunes to a place near a lighthouse where camels congregate.

Ever wanted to ride a camel? Now’s your chance! Climb aboard a dromedary—an Arabian one-humped camel—and amble along the beach and through the sand dunes. If this isn’t your cup of tea, opt for a relaxing stroll by the ocean, noting the beautifully colored, polished stones scattered across the sand.

On our way back to Marrakech, we stop for lunch at Les Jardins de la Villa Maroc, a restored farm nestled in a forest of coniferous thuya (pronounced two-ya) trees. The aromatic wood is used by local artisans to make handicraft boxes with intricate designs.

Then settle into your room at the Sofitel Marrakech, located in the city’s chic Hivernage district, just west of the city center. Why not kick back and savor a poolside break in the garden oasis? This evening we toast our adventures over superb Moroccan and international dishes in the hotel’s dining room. *Lodging: Sofitel Marrakech*

**DAY 6**

**SHUTTLE TO MEDINA OF MARRAKECH** 30 Minutes

**MEDINA WALKING TOUR** 1 Hour

**DAR SI SAID MUSEUM GUIDED TOUR** 1 Hour

After a leisurely breakfast, we take a quick shuttle to Marrakech’s vibrant medina, a World Heritage site that was once an important political, cultural and economic center for the Arab world. Led by our local guide, we wander the labyrinthine lanes of the city’s souks (markets), where all manner of items—colorful textiles, carpets, leather goods, brass and ironwork, musical instruments, jewelry, pottery and a mind-boggling array of potions, powders, spices and perfumes—are hawked amid an unrelenting din of banter and bargaining.

A highlight is the D’jemâa el Fna (Place of the Dead), Marrakech’s sprawling central square. Step into the ancient gathering place and enter another world, an exotic and dizzying constellation of snake charmers, soothsayers, herbalists, storytellers, musicians, scribes, men in tasseled fezzes and adolescent acrobats. It’s an experience not soon forgotten, and a fitting capstone as we near the end our Moroccan adventure.

Then we’re off to the Dar Si Said for a guided tour. It’s the oldest museum in the city, situated in an enormous palace. Filled with ancient objects from Marrakech, it’s also known as the Museum of Moroccan Arts. Relax with a light lunch on a terrace overlooking the medina before we say our goodbyes and shuttle to the Marrakech airport. See "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.
KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE

We are always seeking opportunities to enhance this itinerary. We’ll be certain to notify you of any important changes prior to departure; other changes may be communicated on trip by your leaders.

SHIFT GEARS

Our trips are designed to be flexible, giving you the freedom to experience the best of the region the way YOU want. Feel like you’re ready to go, go, go? We can show you the way! Want some downtime or prefer to head out on your own? No problem! Your Trip Leaders will make sure to tell you the best days to take time for yourself (if you want it) without feeling like you’re missing out. So feel free to shift gears and make it your day!

TRIP ACCOMMODATIONS

Premiere & Casual Hotels*

2 Nights (Casual Hotel)
Domaine de la Roseraie
Tucked away in the Atlas Mountains, a welcoming retreat with rose gardens, citrus groves and horse stables. (pool, spa) | Ouirgane | www.laroseraiehotel.ma | +212-(0)5-24-43-91-28

2 Nights (Pictured)
Heure Bleue Palais
A traditional Moroccan riad, “built around a magnificent lantern-lit patio and courtyard garden planted with palm and banana trees,” said Andrew Harper. A Relais & Châteaux member. (pool, spa) | Essaouira | www.heure-bleue.com | +212-(0)5-24-78-34-34

1 Night
Sofitel Marrakech
In the city’s fashionable Hivernage district, this elegant and modern hotel draws its inspiration from the traditional architecture of the region. (pool, spa) | Marrakech | www.sofitel.accorhotels.com | +212-(0)5-24-42-56-00

*With 2 Casual Hotel nights at Domaine de la Roseraie
ARRIVING & DEPARTING

After reviewing the following information, please inform us of your arrival and departure plans on your Personal Information Form.

All prices are in US dollars and subject to change.

The standard unit of currency in Morocco is the dirham (MAD). At the time of printing, 9.7 MAD = 1 USD. For the most up-to-date exchange rate, visit www.xe.com (Universal Currency Converter).

Meeting Time & Location

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 9:30 a.m. in front of the main entrance of the Marrakech train station, located on Avenue Hassan II in Marrakech, Morocco.

Please arrive wearing comfortable walking shoes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today’s walk (your luggage will be transported to our first night’s accommodations).

Arriving Late to the Trip Start?

If you have a delay or emergency on the day your trip starts and need to contact Backroads, please email your Trip Leaders (you’ll receive an email 24 hours prior to the trip start with their contact info) or call the Backroads office at 800-462-2848 (domestic) or 510-527-1555 (international), 6 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time.

If you miss the pickup in Marrakech, it’s possible to get to our first night’s hotel, Domaine de la Roseraie in Ourgane, on your own. A taxi ride from the Marrakech airport or train station to the Ourgane Valley takes just over an hour and costs around $30–$50. More around 50-60, depending on the number of passengers and pieces of luggage.

Conclusion of the Trip

The trip ends in Marrakech after lunch. Backroads arranges for transportation to the Marrakech airport, arriving at approximately 2 p.m.

Flight Arrangements

This trip starts and ends in Marrakech, Morocco. Flying to Marrakech from the United States requires a stopover in a European city or Casablanca, Morocco. Royal Air Maroc (www.royalairmaroc.com) offers nonstop service from New York’s JFK airport (airport code: JFK) to Casablanca (CMN) with a connecting flight to the Menara Airport (RAK) in Marrakech, arriving the following day.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel advisor or you may choose to work with the Backroads Travel Desk at Cadence Travel. Their professional expert travel advisors are ready to share their insiders’ knowledge of Backroads and our worldwide destinations and are available to assist you with any of your travel needs. Call 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848) to be connected with an advisor or email Backroads@CadenceTravel.com. Please note that ticketing fees apply, based on the services requested. Cadence Travel is open daily from 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time.

Getting Around Marrakech

Taxi fares in Morocco are fairly inexpensive by Western standards. There are two types of taxis in Morocco: grand taxis and petite taxis. Grand taxis are typically Mercedes and provide transport from the airport to the city and to farther destinations. Negotiate the fare before getting into the taxi or be sure the meter is turned on, if there is one. Central Marrakech and the Marrakech train station are located about 5 miles from the airport. Taxi fare into town is about $10–15.

Petite taxis serve passengers within the city. You’ll recognize petite taxis as small yellow/beige vehicles (usually a Fiat Uno, Peugeot or other similar type) with a roof rack for luggage. They do not accept more than three passengers. If you are fewer than three people, don’t be surprised if the driver picks up another passenger who’s heading in the same direction! A typical fare within the city ranges from $2 to $3.50. A 50 percent surcharge is applied after 8 p.m.
DURING YOUR TRIP

Trip Leaders
Each of your Trip Leaders plays many roles during your vacation: guide, host, caretaker, naturalist, chef, historian, troubleshooter, interpreter. These remarkable individuals have highly developed instincts for making people comfortable, for seamlessly handling the logistics of travel and for successfully navigating a wide range of unexpected situations. They’re passionately committed to ensuring you enjoy an exceptional vacation—smooth, flexible and tailored to your needs. According to past guests, the caliber of our leaders is what sets Backroads apart from all other travel companies. With their knowledge, professionalism, enthusiasm and service ethic, they’re the number-one reason people return to travel with us again and again. We look forward to having you meet them.

A Word about Gratuities
We think our leaders are unparalleled at what they do— you be the judge.

Gratuities for most services during your trip are included in the price. While we’ve thought about including a Trip Leader tip as part of the overall trip cost, we acknowledge that gratuities are customary in the industry as a way to recognize excellent service on a more personal level.

We offer specific Trip Leader tip recommendations because our guests have consistently asked for them. The exact amount is up to you.

Our recommended gratuity for this trip is $190 per guest.

This amount can be covered via cash (preferred) or PayPal. To learn more about PayPal and how to sign up, visit www.paypal.com. You will receive a contact list for Trip Leaders at the beginning of the trip which also serves as their PayPal information. Regardless of the number of leaders on your trip, you can pay the full amount to any one of them. Cash and PayPal gratuities are then divided among your Trip Leaders and other Backroads support staff (van drivers, etc.).
Accommodations
All hotel rooms on this trip have private baths. Please keep in mind that double beds in some Moroccan hotels are smaller than those you’d find at comparable hotels in North America. Single room availability is limited.

Roommates
Backroads will try to find a roommate (of the same gender) for guests wishing to share a room. If you sign up more than 95 days in advance of your trip and no roommate is available, 50 percent of the private room charge will be due at final payment. Should a roommate be found before your trip departs, the private room charge will be refunded. If you sign up less than 95 days in advance of departure and no roommate is available, the full private room charge will apply. If a roommate is found before your trip departs, the private room charge will be refunded. On some trips, twin rooms are limited or unavailable; a private room charge applies if a shared twin room is not available, regardless of the number of days before departure. Please be sure to speak with your Trip Consultant to confirm your room arrangements.

Cell Service & Internet Access
Cell phone and data service is limited in some of the locations we visit on this trip. Internet access is available at all of our hotels, although the connection may be slower than ideal.

Meals
Food is an important part of the Backroads experience. For lunch we look for the best way to capture the essence of the region. It may be a Backroads Grand Picnic, when your Trip Leaders prepare the freshest and healthiest local fare at a carefully chosen setting along the day’s route; a boxed lunch; a packed lunch; a meal together at a favorite restaurant; or the opportunity to have lunch on your own.

Our dinners feature regional specialties at gourmet restaurants, frequently with specially prepared limited menus. Moroccan cuisine uses spices extensively and has been influenced by its surrounding cultures for centuries, blending Mediterranean, Arabic and Andalusian flavors.

All meals are included in the trip price.

Be aware that vegetarian/vegan, gluten-free and low-carb dishes are not always available. If you have special dietary requirements, please indicate them on the Personal Information Form. Your Trip Consultant will pass on the information to your Trip Leaders. Alcoholic beverages at meals are not included in the trip price, unless otherwise noted.

If you’re a strict vegetarian, your meals will probably be limited to variations of veggies, couscous and salad. The vegetables served in the hotels are perfectly safe to eat. If you eat fish, you’re in luck—the seafood is especially good in Morocco.

Your Trip Leaders work hard to ensure that all the food you eat outside our hotels is safe. In our experience, food is generally so fresh and well prepared that it rarely poses a problem. It’s the massive buffets and large hotels (where we don’t stay) that are suspect. But the local café—enjoy!

Recommended Dinner Attire
Sophisticated-casual attire is appropriate at the restaurants on this trip. For men we recommend collared shirts and slacks. For women we suggest dresses, skirts (not so much) or dressy pants.

Nice jeans are fine, but please do not wear shorts or sneakers to dinner.

Luggage Restrictions
A few words of caution to remember while packing for your trip: we advise that you not bring valuable jewelry or lots of expensive camera gear. Keep in mind that foreign travelers toting large cameras are very conspicuous to locals. Curious village children most certainly will cluster around you and wonder what else you have in your daypack. It’s best to be conservative and travel light; bring a small easy-to-focus camera and a minimum of extra gear.

Lost Luggage
On any flight, there is the possibility of lost luggage. Backroads believes that it’s a great idea to take a small carry-on bag with enough clothing and supplies to last a day or two. Also be sure to bring with you any personal gear you deem indispensable on the trip. This way, in the event of lost luggage you won’t have to spend time
replacing essential items and miss activities while you wait for your bags to catch up. Please note that Backroads does not assume responsibility for any luggage lost or damaged during your trip.

**Security**

When traveling, there is always a possibility of theft. While you’re enjoying the sights, remember to stay alert and always be aware of your immediate surroundings, especially in crowded locations and tourist areas. The best rule of thumb is to carry only the cash you need for the day, along with a copy of your passport, on your person and leave the rest in a locked safe in your room. If no safe is available, it’s a good idea to keep your cash and passport in a money belt worn under your clothes. For more safety tips, refer to the Country Specific Information page on the US State Department’s website at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

**Trip Guest List**

During the trip, leaders will distribute a guest list that includes the names and contact information of everyone on the trip. If you do not want your contact information to appear on the guest list, please inform your Trip Consultant at least 30 days prior to the trip start.

**Muslim Dress Codes**

Morocco is a Muslim country, and even though you may see more liberal Western styles of dress and social behavior in the larger cities such as Marrakech, you should remember that showing excessive amounts of bare skin—especially for women—is considered offensive to strict Muslims. Because we hike primarily through small villages, we think you’ll feel most comfortable dressed conservatively. Loose-fitting shirts with short or long sleeves, and long loose-fitting pants (for men and women) will not only show respect for the local customs, but will also protect you from the hot desert sun. **Women should make sure that their shoulders and upper arms are covered at all times.**

**Restrooms in Morocco**

Our hotels are some of the finest in Morocco and are fully equipped for all your needs. Most of the toilets are Western-style raised commodes and the newer models have two-flush mechanisms to conserve water. You may also see the older flat "elephant’s feet" type of toilet on which you squat rather than sit. Don’t be intimidated—they’re actually very hygienic—just make sure any items in your pockets are secure!

When it comes to restrooms, it’s the countryside that poses a challenge. For the most part you will not see a public restroom on our hikes through rural areas. At the start of the trip you’ll receive a packet of toiletries that will facilitate using the great outdoors; just think of the view!

**Laundry**

Laundry service is available at all our hotels, but as it usually takes more than one day, you should not rely on it. Instead, we recommend that you bring quick-drying clothes that you can wash out in your hotel room as needed. It will not take long for your clothes to dry in Morocco’s arid climate.
DESTINATION DETAILS

Climate

While on our Morocco adventure, we traverse two distinct climatic zones: high mountains and coastal hills. Expect daytime temperatures anywhere between the mid-60s and mid-80s, depending on the time of year, altitude, proximity to the coast and the whims of Mother Nature. Although temperatures can reach the mid-80s, don’t assume you can get by with only T-shirts and shorts. **It gets surprisingly cold in the Atlas Mountains**, so please do bring some cold-weather clothes and a rain jacket. Rain pants are probably not necessary, although it’s not a bad idea to bring them along if you find an empty corner in your bag.

Marrakech

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Temperatures in this region are measured in degrees Celsius. Zero degrees Celsius is 32 degrees Fahrenheit. For a quick conversion, double the Celsius reading and add 30 to determine the approximate temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

Time Zone

Morocco follows Greenwich mean time year-round. When the United States is not on daylight saving time, Morocco is 5 hours ahead of eastern time and 8 hours ahead of Pacific time.

Phone Facts

Many US cell phones can operate internationally. Check with your service provider before leaving home for information about international calling and data plans, and on making and receiving international calls. If your cell phone is unlocked and operates using a SIM card, you may want to consider purchasing a SIM card from a local cell phone company. These should be readily available at airports and convenience stores, and typically come loaded with prepaid credit which can be used for domestic and international calls and data service. Rates will vary.

Alternatively, it may also be possible to rent a phone for use during your international travels. We recommend Cellhire, which offers a wide range of wireless rental options in more than 180 countries. Visit [www.cellhire.com](http://www.cellhire.com) or call 877-244-7242 for details and reservations.

International Dialing Instructions

The international phone numbers in this Travel Planner are listed using the following format:

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+212-(0)#-##-##-##
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212 is Morocco’s country code, followed by 0 (used only when dialing from within Morocco), and an area code and local number.

To place an international call to Morocco, dial + or the international access code of the country from which you’re calling (e.g. 011 from the US) - 212 - area code - local number.

To place an international call from Morocco, dial + or 00 (Morocco’s international access code) - country.
code of the country to which you’re calling (e.g. 1 for the US) - area code - local number. For example, to call the United States, dial 00 - 1 - area code - local number.

To place a call within Morocco, drop the country code 212 and dial 0 - area code - local number. The area code is always used when placing calls within Morocco.

For additional information on placing international phone calls, visit www.countrycallingcodes.com.

Money Matters
The standard unit of currency in Morocco is the dirham (MAD). At the time of printing, 9.7 MAD = 1 USD. For the most up-to-date exchange rate, visit www.xe.com (Universal Currency Converter).

The export of dirhams is prohibited, so you will not be able to exchange money before entering Morocco. You will also need to change your money back from dirhams before leaving the country. You can change money at the airport upon your arrival, and at banks and hotels along the route. Private money-changing offices typically offer better exchange rates than hotels. Exchange rates are listed in banks and most hotels.

The best way to access cash is to use ATMs. Before you leave home, it’s a good idea to verify with your bank that your card will work overseas and inquire whether or not your financial institution has a local partner bank that will waive ATM fees. Most international ATM keyboards have only numbers, so if your PIN contains letters, make note of the corresponding numbers. Additionally, most international ATMs only accept four-character PINs, so if yours is longer, arrange to have it changed before your trip.

If you need to exchange cash or traveler’s checks, avoid exchange bureaus, which charge sky-high rates. The rates at banks are slightly better, but still expensive. It may also be possible to exchange cash and traveler’s checks at airports, train stations, post offices and some tourist offices.

Language
The official language of Morocco is Arabic. French is also spoken and is the official language of business and government. English is understood in larger cities, and Berber is spoken in most rural areas.

Cultural Considerations
Begging: As with many other countries, begging is a part of life for some citizens of Morocco’s more touristy areas. You may experience this in the form of groups of children approaching you and asking for pens. Donne-moi un stylo! (Give me a pen!) is often the only French phrase they know. Some guidebooks suggest that you bring with you small gifts of pens, candy and money for this purpose; however, we suggest that if you would like to contribute something to the community, bring school supplies, such as paper, erasers and pens. Your leaders will then plan a visit to a local school, where the supplies can be distributed as needed.

Faux Guides: While traveling on your own in Morocco or exploring towns during your Backroads vacation, you probably will encounter young men or boys offering their services as “guides.” These “faux guides” are unregistered (all authentic guides in Morocco are registered and must pay a yearly fee), and their tour will no doubt cost you more than you had planned and perhaps end up at a friend’s rug or trinket shop, where you will be pressed to buy your share of goods. To avoid being hassled, be firm with your “no” response and assure them that you know where you are going and do not require assistance. If you would like an official guide to show you some of the sights in the larger cities (which can be a great way to explore the area without constantly being approached), we suggest hiring one through your hotel.

Bargaining: The souks and shops of Morocco are hubs of activity where you’ll find all sorts of handicrafts, clothes, jewelry, household items, rugs, food, spices and more. The experience of shopping in Morocco involves spirited haggling, which is done by Moroccans with great skill and enjoyment. If you are unfamiliar with this practice, you will soon get a taste of it as you wander amid the merchandise stalls in the medina and listen to the interactions between buyer and seller. You may witness an offering of mint tea, a series of rejected prices and finally, an agreed-upon price that was probably well known by both parties from the beginning!

Health Precautions
There are no health entry requirements for visiting Morocco, although it’s always a good idea to check with your doctor before traveling overseas to make sure that your vaccinations, such as those for typhoid and tetanus, are up to date. You may also want to consider getting
vaccinated for rabies as well as an immune globulin shot (administered a week before leaving) for the prevention of hepatitis A.

The most common health risk for visitors to foreign countries is "traveler’s diarrhea." Food in Morocco may be different from what you are used to at home, and this change in diet may cause stomach reactions. There are many over-the-counter remedies available to help relieve diarrhea; it’s a good idea to bring some with you on your trip. Because traveler’s diarrhea can also occur due to contaminated food and water, it’s important to be extremely careful about your food and water consumption. The food served at our hotels is safe to eat, since our hotels cater to many foreigners and are accustomed to Western standards of hygiene. However, take extra care when sampling the fare at local restaurants and market stalls. When purchasing fruits or vegetables from street vendors, we recommend that you buy products that you can peel or wash in purified water.

Tap water in Morocco is generally not safe to drink. Most hotels provide filtered or bottled water, and your leaders will provide bottled water throughout the trip. Shops along the route sell bottled water, fruit juice and soft drinks. It’s best to avoid ice, since it may be made from unfiltered water.

The combination of warm temperatures and exercise greatly increases your body’s need for fluids. It is extremely important to drink plenty of liquids to protect yourself against heatstroke and dehydration. Drink as often as possible—don’t wait until you are thirsty! You might want to bring along a Camelbak or similar "hydration backpack," which enables you to carry more water and drink regularly without having to stop.

For more specific and up-to-date information on health precautions for traveling in Morocco, consult your doctor or call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline (877-FYI-TRIP or 877-394-8747), which offers a recorded message that includes health information for travelers to foreign countries. Information is also available on their website at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel.

**Electric Current**

Morocco’s electricity runs on a 220-volt, 50-cycle current. A plug adapter is necessary if you plan to bring appliances from home. You may also need a converter, but many newer appliances, such as computers and digital devices, are designed to work/charge over a wide range of voltage levels. Check the manufacturer’s label on the back of your appliances to see what level of input they can handle. Converter/adapter kits can be purchased at travel, hardware or electronics stores for $40–$60; an adapter alone costs about $4.

**Helpful Information**

Visit www.backroads.com/trip_prep for links to other websites offering helpful travel information.

**Visitor Information**

Consulate General of Morocco in New York
www.moroccanconsulate.com

Moroccan National Tourist Office
www.visitmorocco.com

The Africa Guide
www.africaguide.com/country/morocco

Morocco Channel
www.morocco.com

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**Recommended Reading**

The more you know about your destination before you go, the more you’ll appreciate all that you’ll see when you get there. We’ve selected a few of our favorite books to help capture the essence of the region.

– *Secret Son*, Laila Lalami
– *The Caliph’s House: A Year in Casablanca*, Tahir Shah
– *The Voices of Marrakesh: A Record of a Visit*, Elias Canetti
– *A History of Modern Morocco*, Susan Gilson Miller
– *In Arabian Nights: A Caravan of Moroccan Dreams*, Tahir Shah
TRIP DOCUMENTS & MORE

Travel Documents

A valid passport is required for travel to Morocco. A visa is not required for US citizens, provided you are staying in the country less than 90 days.

Note that some countries require your passport to be valid for a specified amount of time beyond your departure date (up to 6 months). Be sure to check the expiration date and physical condition of your passport and verify the travel document requirements with the consulates of the countries you are planning to visit during your trip. Passports issued to minors under the age of 16 are set to expire every 5 years. Check your expiration dates carefully!

The best way to ensure you have the most current information on entry requirements is by contacting the Consulate General of Morocco in New York (www.moroccanconsulate.com; 212-758-2625). You may also find helpful information on the US State Department’s website: travel.state.gov.

IMPORTANT: Each time you renew your passport, you are issued a new passport number. Depending on the trip, some of our service providers (like hotels or airlines) may require current passport information for each guest, so if you renew your passport after booking your trip, please make sure to update us with the new information prior to your departure date.

We recommend that you make two photocopies of your airline ticket/e-ticket confirmation and your passport. Leave one set of copies at home with a friend or relative, and bring one set with you, keeping it separate from the original documents.

Travel Protection Plan

Inside your Pre-Departure Packet is a brochure describing the Travel Protection Plan that Backroads offers. The plan helps provide coverage for trip cancellation/trip interruption, trip delay, medical expenses and evacuation/repatriation, lost baggage, and more. We recommend that you purchase travel protection to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. If you are interested in purchasing the Travel Protection Plan that Backroads offers, please remit the additional amount noted on your invoice.

Cancellations & Refunds

If you must cancel your reservation, a fee will be charged. Please review your trip invoice for cancellation policy details. Exceptions to this policy cannot be made for any reason, including those of weather or personal emergencies. There is no refund for joining a trip late or leaving early. Private rooms and staterooms, bike rentals and internal air charges are considered part of the trip price and are subject to cancellation fees. You are required to provide a signed Release of Liability, Assumption of All Risks and Arbitration Agreement and a completed Personal Information Form prior to your trip departure. If you fail to provide a signed release form, you will not be allowed to join the trip and will be subject to Backroads’ cancellation policy.

On the rare occasions when Backroads must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, which constitutes full settlement. Backroads is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any cancelled trips, such as airline tickets or for costs incurred due to travel delays, flight cancellations or illness.

Transfers

With the exception of Private and Custom Trips, you may transfer from one trip to another without penalty, within the parameters of your trip’s transfer policy. When transferring to a different date or trip, if the trip costs more than your original trip, you are responsible for the difference in cost. Please review your trip invoice for additional transfer policy details. After the allowable transfer date, our cancellation policy applies. Cancellation penalties will not be charged if you are able to fill the vacancy with another guest(s).

Itinerary Changes

If unforeseen circumstances require a change in the trip itinerary, Backroads will make every effort to select alternative accommodations of the same quality and to keep the activity modifications minimal.
Electronics & Other Valuables

It is best to leave valuables at home. If you must bring valuables on the trip, please understand that they are 100 percent your responsibility, regardless of what anyone (including leaders) might tell you. Cash, jewelry and passports are especially important to keep in your possession. It’s not safe to leave valuables in Backroads vans; while not common, break-ins do happen. You may choose to lock them in your room’s safe, if one is available to you. If you’re concerned about forgetting items in the safe (easy to do!), a good trick is to leave something on top of it that you can’t forget, such as a single shoe.

Although we will transport your valuables during your trip as a convenience, we do not assume responsibility for any damage or loss. This policy applies to personal electronics as well as other items, such as luggage, jewelry, and fragile and delicate accessories, whether purchased on the trip or otherwise.

After your trip ends, if you realize that you’ve accidentally left an item behind in Backroads’ possession, we’ll do our best to honor return requests. However, we’re not able to guarantee returns based on leader availability limitations to find and send items (our leaders are on the go!) and possible shipping issues. If you’ve left an item at a hotel, please contact that hotel directly to make arrangements.

On-Your-Own Activities

During, before or after your Backroads trip, there may be time for you to enjoy some of the area’s special activities on your own. These activities are not included in your Backroads trip itinerary and are not options sponsored by Backroads, but they can often be a highlight for those who choose to participate. We mention them so you are aware and because you might enjoy these activities on your own. Please understand that Backroads is not responsible for any problems which may occur during any on-your-own activities.

WORLD BICYCLE RELIEF

MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

Backroads is pleased to support World Bicycle Relief’s mission of providing bicycles to women, students, rural workers, healthcare providers and others in disadvantaged communities worldwide.

VISIT WORLDBICYCLERELIEF.ORG

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GETTING ACTIVE FOR YOUR TRIP

NAVIGATION OPTIONS ON THIS TRIP

Turn-by-turn paper directions included.

Downloadable GPS files available for use on your own device—log into your account at www.backroads.com 2 weeks before your trip for more details.

Activity Level

The routes on this trip are rated Levels 1–3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY LEVEL</th>
<th>BIKING</th>
<th>WALKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avg. Time in hours</td>
<td>Avg. Miles</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>2–4 hrs</td>
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<td>3–5 hrs</td>
<td>26–42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4–6 hrs</td>
<td>36–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5–7+ hrs</td>
<td>48–70+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Review the “Activity Level” section on the web for more details on daily route options.

Terrain

The hiking routes on this trip primarily follow dirt paths that range from level to moderately hilly. Liberal shuttling is incorporated into the itinerary to facilitate our activities and the mileage is kept moderate to allow you to spend more time exploring on your own.

Remember, take your time and go at your own pace— you’re on vacation! Your Backroads Trip Leaders will be available at intersecting routes when you’re ready for a snack, a cool drink, or a lift back if you’re done for the day. Most days you’ll have a choice of mileage options, so you can decide how active you want to be—it’s always up to you.

Conditioning Tips

Every Backroads trip is designed to appeal to a wide variety of interests and fitness levels. We know your pace may vary from one day to the next—and your traveling companions’ may differ somewhat from yours. So we present a range of mileage options, and each day you decide exactly what and how much you want to do.

Before your trip, we suggest walking and hiking regularly and hitting a few hills whenever you can. Review the route options in the daily itinerary for the range of mileages offered on this trip. But mostly, just show up and have fun!

Resources

The American Hiking Society website is packed with all sorts of useful information related to walking and hiking. Visit americanhiking.org.

Your local outdoor store can be an excellent resource too; ask to speak with an experienced employee.

Staying Comfortable: FAQs

Q: Do I need to bring hiking boots for my trip?

A: Varying weather conditions and terrain can make any trail challenging, whether you’re hiking up a mountain or walking through a valley. We recommend hiking boots or sturdy hiking shoes (sometimes called "light hikers") with robust tread, ample ankle support and waterproofing. Your average running shoes often have inadequate tread and stability for terrain like gravel and mud—though even these may be suitable if you know that’s what works for you. Most importantly, your shoes should be comfortable and well broken in before your trip starts.
Q: It’s not really going to rain during the trip, is it?

A: Well, it just might! Rain is possible no matter where you travel. Your best bet for staying comfortable during a shower is to wear quality rain gear that is both waterproof and breathable.

Q: Does wearing layers really make a difference?

A: Yes! The trick for staying comfortable in fluctuating temperatures is to wear three basic non-cotton layers of lightweight clothing: innerwear (to wick moisture away from your skin), insulating garments (for warmth) and outerwear (to protect against wind or rain). The different layers let you add or remove clothing in response to changes in the weather or your internal temperature.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

For help making hotel reservations for before and after your Backroads trip:

• Work with your own professional travel advisor.

• Contact the Backroads Travel Desk at Cadence Travel by calling 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848), open daily from 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time. Please note that ticketing fees apply, based on the services requested.

• Book directly with the hotel or through a discount website.

Please note that Backroads does not block rooms and does not offer special rates for pre- and post-trip stays. If you plan on extending your stay at our first night’s hotel before the trip starts or our last night’s hotel when the trip ends, let the hotel reservations agent know that you’re traveling with Backroads—you may be able to avoid changing rooms. We recommend booking your rooms as early as possible, especially during peak travel season!

HOTEL ROOM RATES

In US Dollars Per Night

- $501 and up.........................★★★★★
- $300 to $500.........................★★★★
- $201 to $300.........................★★★
- Up to $200...........................★★

The following is a selection of recommended properties that span a range of prices, amenities and locations. Refer to the Hotel Room Rates guide for the starting
double-occupancy rates, which were accurate at time of printing. Note that rates are subject to change and some hotels may require a minimum stay.

**Marrakech**

Hotel map: bit.ly/MarrakechPPH

**Amanjena**

Aman Resorts' first African property, this spectacular Moorish retreat is set amid palms, ancient olive trees, lush gardens and breathtaking views of the surrounding High Atlas. (pool, spa) | Route de Ouarzazate, Km 12 | www.aman.com/resorts/amanjena | 800-477-9180 (from the US) or +212-(0)5-24-39-90-00 | 40 pavilions & maisons | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

**Four Seasons Resort Marrakech**

Featuring a luxurious spa and landscaped pools, the impressive Four Seasons is designed with a distinctly Moroccan touch. This calming oasis is just a 5-minute drive from the Medina. (pool, spa) | 1 Boulevard de la Menara | +212-(0)5-24-25-92-00 | www.fourseasons.com | 141 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

**La Maison Arabe**

La Maison Arabe features one of the city’s most desirable restaurants and has a reputation for being one of the region’s finest boutique hotels. For a special treat, try one of the hotel’s culinary workshops. (pool, spa) | 1 Derb Assehbé Bab Doukkala | +212-(0)5-24-38-70-10 | www.lamaisonarabe.com | 26 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

**La Mamounia**

Nestled within the ancient walls of the old city, this exquisite palace soothes you with its traditional Moroccan ambience, modern amenities and unique blend of art deco and Moorish design. Condé Nast Traveler Gold List. (pool, spa) | Avenue Bab Jdid | www.mamounia.com | +212-(0)5-24-38-86-00 | 210 rooms, suites & riads | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

**Les Jardins de la Medina**

Luxury accommodations just 10 minutes from the airport and the middle of the Medina. (pool, spa) | 21 Derb Chhtouka, Kasbah de Marrakech, Marrakech 40000 | www.lesjardinsdelamedina.com | +212-(0)5-24-38-18-51 | 36 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦

**Riad le Clos des Arts**

This classic riad is located in the center of the Medina, in the Riad Zitoane Jdid quarter. A short walk from the Dar Si Saïd Museum, the Bahia Palace and the Jemaa el-Fna Square. (pool) | 24 bis, Arset el Hamed, Bab Doukkala | www.leclosdesarts.com | +212-(0)5-24-37-51-59 | 8 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦

**Essaouira**

If you're extending your stay in Morocco, Essaouira is a fantastic place to spend more time. There’s plenty to discover in this historic city, with its ancient medina, artisan shops and sandy beach.

Hotel map: bit.ly/EssaouiraHotels

**Madada Mogador**

This chic boutique hotel combines traditional Moroccan décor elements with modern streamlined design and is located just behind the city ramparts, overlooking the ocean. | 5 Rue Youssif el Fassi | www.madada.com | +212-(0)5-24-47-55-12 | 7 suites | Rates: ✦ ✦

**MGallery Le Medina Essaouira Hotel**

This beachfront resort on the edge of the medina blends Western comforts and facilities with local cultural and architectural touches. (pool, spa) | Avenue Mohamed V | www.sofitel.com | +212-(0)5-25-07-25-26 | 117 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦
SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

**LUGGAGE REMINDERS**

Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase (we recommend 25”–28”, preferably not hard case) and one small carry-on bag. Be sure to mark your luggage with your contact information.

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**Essential**

**Travel Items**
- international travel documents (i.e. passport, visa, etc.)
- photocopy of front page of passport (kept in a separate place from passport)
- wallet (credit cards, bank cards & ID)
- cash for incidentals & leader gratuities
- airline tickets/e-ticket confirmation details
- sealable, quart-size plastic bags for stowing small liquid containers, swimsuit, etc.
- toiletries (including sunscreen & lip ointment)
- medications & copies of prescriptions
- list of important addresses & contact numbers

**Active Clothing & Gear**
- light hikers or boots
- hiking socks
- walking/hiking shorts and/or lightweight pants
- non-cotton base layers of varying weights
- lightweight hiking jacket or vest
- hat with brim
- daypack/waistpack (for water, camera, snacks)
- sunglasses (with retention strap)
- sport sandals and/or flip-flops
- swimsuit

**Optional**

- camera & charger (remember to enter our Guest Photo Contest!)
- cell phone & charger
- voltage converter/plug adapter (if applicable)
- alarm clock
- CamelBak or similar hydration backpack
- guidebook and/or field guides
- notebook/travel journal & pens
- local language dictionary/phrase book (if applicable)
- reading material
- earplugs
- insect repellent

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**Rain Gear & Cold Weather Clothing**

You may not need all of the items listed here, but they are necessary to stay comfortable in case of rain or unseasonably cold weather.
- waterproof (breathable) rain jacket & pants
- waterproof/water-resistant warm gloves
- warm jacket (easy to pack)
- warm hat

**Non-Active Clothing**

- clothing & shoes for downtime & restaurants
- lightweight jacket (like fleece) or warm sweater

Backroads provides water bottles & walking sticks.

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**GREAT GEAR VENDORS**

For a list of some of our favorite gear and gadget retailers, visit [www.backroads.com/gearup](http://www.backroads.com/gearup).