

EXPLORE!



Cycle Morocco - Atlas to the Sahara

MOROCCO - TRIP CODE CSO

CYCLING

Why book this trip?

Discover the kasbahs, tribal villages and cool oases of the Draa Valley on this cycling holiday in Morocco. Cycle through the remote hamada desert of the Sahara and enjoy an exhilarating High Atlas descent through the Berber heartland.

- **Overnight Sahara camp** - Ride camels through Saharan sand dunes and camp overnight in a desert wilderness
- **Thrilling descent** - Enjoy a scenic descent from the stunning High Atlas mountain pass of Tizi N'Fedrhate Pass
- **Marrakech** - Discover Morocco's vibrant Red City, with its atmospheric medina and lively Djemma-el-Fna Square.

**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 7
Dinner: 1

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour
Leader / Cycle
guide
Assistant Cycle
Guide
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)

**TRANSPORT**

Bicycle
Minibus

**ACCOMMODATION**

1 nights simple
camping
6 nights
comfortable hotel

**CYCLING**

GRADE:
Moderate

**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Marrakech

We join our trip in vibrant Marrakech. For centuries the meeting place for the mountain Berbers and the desert people of the south, it is divided into two distinct parts - Gueliz (the modern French-built city) and the old medina. The city's beating heart is the lively Djemma-el-Fna square - alive with storytellers, musicians, jugglers and snake charmers. At sunset, dozens of food stalls are energetically set up for the evening trade, selling everything from snails and sheep heads to broths and tagines.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Almas (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Explore Marrakech; drive High Atlas pass to Ouarzazate

This morning, we have some time to visit the souks and sites of the medina before our drive to the garrison town of Ouarzazate - gateway to the Sahara Desert. Our journey takes us over the dramatic High Atlas pass of Tizi n' Tichka, at an altitude of 2,260 metres. En route, we plan to visit the spectacular fortified city of Ait Benhaddou - classified a UNESCO World Heritage Site and considered by many as one of Morocco's most picturesque settings. Richly decorated and studded with crenelated towers, the town's spectacular kasbah may be recognised from scenes in Jesus of Nazareth, Lawrence of Arabia, Gladiator and, most recently, Game of Thrones. The drive to Ouarzazate takes about 4 hours.

We spend the night in Ouarzazate and prepare for tomorrow's cycling journey.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Les Jardins de Ouarzazate (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



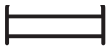
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Cycling in the Draa Valley, then drive to Alnif

Leaving Ouarzazate by bus, we drive over the dramatic Tizi n'Tiniffit mountain pass, rising to an altitude of 1,800 metres amid the lunar landscape of the Anti-Atlas. We continue down into one of the most stunning natural wonders of Morocco - the Draa Valley, where we have the opportunity to enjoy an exhilarating cycle ride. Littered with kasbahs and ksours (fortified villages), the Draa Valley is the largest date palm oasis in Morocco. We begin cycling before the small town of Agdz and head south on descending terrain through lush oases. We will get back into our vehicle for the last part of our journey to our overnight stop at Alnif which takes about 3 hours.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 45 kilometers (120 meters total accumulated ascent and 342 meters descent).





ACCOMMODATION:
Kasbah Meteorites (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Cycle the foothills of Jebel Sahro; camel trek to camp

This morning, we cycle from our hotel along the southern foothills of the Jebel Sahro mountain range, against the spectacular backdrop of the 2,712 metre Amalou n'Mansour peak. This is a very remote part of Morocco and few cars pass through this vast area of stony hammada desert. Later we drive to Merzouga (approximately 2 1/2 hours), from where we will go on an exciting camel trek to explore the contrasting and more stereotypical desert landscape of Erg Chebbi. This spectacular natural wonder is home to the largest expanse of sand in Morocco, with giant dunes peaking at an impressive 150 metres. In actual fact, landscapes like this only cover about one fifth of the Sahara's surface, the rest is made up of vast rock and gravel plains. Our camel trek takes us to our desert camp where we will spend the night. This ultimate 'Arabian Nights' experience allows us to experience the unrivalled tranquillity of this desert setting. Mattresses, blankets and pillows are provided and washing facilities, including flushing toilets, are available.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 50 kilometers (92 meters total accumulated ascent and 210 meters descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Nomad Camp - Chebbi Dunes (or similar)



Grade: Simple Camping



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 5 - Enjoy Sunrise in the sand dunes then pedal to Erfoud

This morning, we recommend rising early to watch the spectacular desert sunrise as it casts shadows across the rolling dunes. After breakfast, we return to Merzouga by camel. A short drive takes us to the start of today's cycle ride in the Rissani region- homeland of the Alaouite dynasty, which reigned in this area for 300 years. Cycling through an expansive desert landscape on mostly flat terrain, we pass palmeries and ksours on our journey to Erfoud - our base for the night.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 38 kilometers (56 meters total accumulated ascent and 17 meters descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Kasbah Tizimi (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Bike though local villages en route to El Kelaa Mgouna

This morning, we set off on our bikes towards Tinerhir in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. Passing alongside the ancient 'Fogaras' subterranean irrigation system, our route takes us through a lush oasis, abundant with date palms and olive groves, fruit orchards and almonds trees, all littered amongst a fertile landscape of grain and vegetables. Our bus will pick us up for the last part of our journey to Todra Gorge - renowned as one of the most spectacular canyons in the world. Here, ochre-coloured rock walls rise vertically to a height of 160 meters, leaving just a narrow pass through which the track and river struggle for right of way. We have time to explore these deep, narrow mountain chasms on foot and are likely to see the Berber women drive their goats through the gorge to the better grazing land higher up. We continue our journey by vehicle along the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech to reach our overnight stop in El Kelaa des M'Gouna. Our driving time is about 4 1/2 hours. Known as the 'town of the roses', it is surrounded by a landscape of scented blooms each spring. These are harvested in May during the famous Festival of the Roses, before being processed into rosewater and sold throughout the Islamic world.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 40 kilometers (100 meters total accumulated ascent and 19 meters descent).



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Ksar Kaissar (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Ride down the Atlas Mountains and return to Marrakech

After an early breakfast, we drive into the High Atlas to the Tizi n'Fedrhate Pass at an altitude of 2,150 metres. From here, we start cycling down into the northern foothills of the Atlas Mountains, through some of the most dramatic scenery of this entire trip. Amid the silence of the mountain valleys, the hardy Berbers cultivate fields of barley, wheat, olives, figs, beans, peas and almond groves. Here, tradition is strong and social organisation remains uncompromisingly tribal. These 'Lords of the Atlas' present us with a unique view of a way of life lost to the rest of North Africa, where music and dance, even language and religion, are far removed from their Arab neighbours. Later, we get back into our vehicle, returning to Marrakech late in the afternoon.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 50 kilometers (170 meters total accumulated ascent and 1574 meters descent).

Please note: Today's cycling route may have to be altered in adverse weather conditions.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Almas (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Trip ends Marrakech

Our trip ends in Marrakech today after breakfast. Depending on the time of your flight, you might be able to spend some additional time exploring the city independently.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

Morocco

Climate

The climate is both Mediterranean and Atlantic. The dry, hot season is from May to October when summer temperatures can reach 38°C and above (if sight seeing is included we will do our best to avoid the heat of the day during this period). Temperatures may drop significantly at times during the night as the day's heat rapidly diminishes. From December to January snow can be expected on mountain passes and it can be wet. In winter, day temperatures will probably be around 18-25°C, dropping to perhaps 0-5°C.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
0	2 Pin Round	Islam	Arabic, Berber, French.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Clothing

We recommend you bring padded cycle shorts and quick drying cycle shirts for the daily cycling. Soaked cotton clothes tend not to dry while cycling. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall.

Evenings and nights can become quite cold between October and March. It is advisable to take warm clothing (e.g. track suit or thermal underwear) to sleep in, as some of the Moroccan hotel rooms do not have heating. Keep in mind that at altitude and in the desert, temperatures can drop rapidly, so a warm sweater or fleece, plus waterproof/windproof shell garment, hat and gloves are essential. Don't forget your swimming costume in the warmer months.

Morocco is a Muslim country and it is important to dress with respect for local customs. People may be offended by shorts or revealing dresses, which can attract unwelcome attention. We advise that in general both men and women should cover shoulders, upper arms and knees. Transparent, 'plunging' necklines and tightfitting clothes should be avoided. Women should also cover their heads when entering a sanctuary, though in general, mosques are forbidden to non-Muslims. For those clients on a cycling holiday please bear this information in mind for times that you are not on the bikes. While cycling it is no problem for both men and women to wear your regular cycling gear, tight fitting or not.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to

consider bringing a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Please note that for the desert camping thick mattresses, blankets and sheets are provided for you. In the winter months between November and March you may consider bringing a sleeping bag to supplement the blankets provided as night temperatures can be very cold.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow £25.00 per person for group tipping.

Morocco

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6.00 - 8.00	£8.00 - 12.00	£2.5	£0.6

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Moroccan Dirham (MAD).

Recommended Currency For Exchange

US Dollars, Sterling and Euros are readily exchangeable. We recommend you take a mixture of cash and credit cards. Scottish bank notes and Australian dollar travellers cheques and cash are NOT normally accepted in Morocco.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in main towns/cities, though can be unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance

Not all places.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are difficult to exchange and are not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bicycle, Minibus

Accommodation notes

Comfortable - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Simple - These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

Morocco is a developing country and as such, the accommodation standards are not equivalent to those in Europe and can be more basic. We generally choose our properties because of their location, cleanliness, traditional style or for their welcoming atmosphere, as we endeavour to provide an authentic Moroccan experience. However, some of the properties might have some outdated or simple furniture and the level of service may vary depending on the location. You may find that availability of hot water is variable or limited in certain locations. Breakfasts are generally continental style. A swimming pool is often available, especially in the cities.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the

circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Morocco: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

UK passport holders are requested to have at least 3 months validity from the date of entry into Morocco. All other nationalities please check with your nearest embassy for requirements of passport validity.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport. On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Morocco

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Cycling information



General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 227 km over five days (an average of 45 km a day). The terrain is mainly flat or downhill on tarmac roads (90% tarmac, 10% dirt roads) and we use a bus to drive the steeper sections. We have graded the route as moderate.

Bike included

27 gear Cannondale Off Road or Trail Mountain Bike with front suspension (or similar).

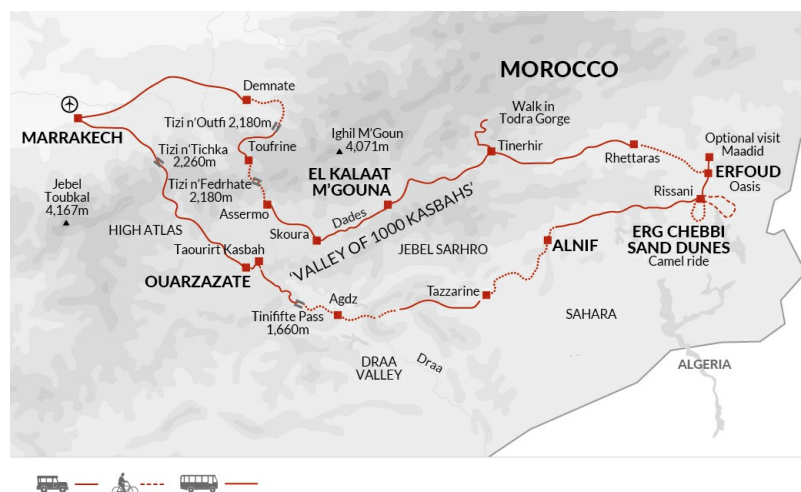
Bike information

Your included bike is a 27 gear Cannondale Off Road or Trail Mountain Bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A handlebar bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

Moderate

Additional Information



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**