



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 under the stars
- **Thrilling descent** - Enjoy a scenic descent from the stunning High Atlas mountain pass of Tizi N'Fedrhate
- **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

Arrive in Marrakech. Morocco's famous Red City, Marrakech is the spiritual heart of the country, a cultural melting pot of the mountain Berbers and the desert peoples of the south. Blessed with some of the most stunning architecture in Morocco, its mix of tradition, colour and history makes it the ideal starting point.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Marrakech at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Marrakesh Menara Airport (RAK), which is around 20 minutes from the hotel. For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 6pm for the welcome meeting. Should you miss the meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to relax beside our hotel's swimming pool or take a stroll around Djemma El Fna Square.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Almas (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Drive into the High Atlas; cycle down to Ait Ben Haddou

This morning we start by driving into the heart of the Atlas Mountains. Our journey takes around 2 and a half hours and takes us over the dramatic High Atlas pass of Tizi n' Tichka, at an altitude of 2,260 metres, we stop here for a photo then continue on to the intricately decorated Kasbah Telouet. Built in the 1860's by the El Glaoui family and located on the former caravan route from the Sahara to Marrakesh. Not far from here, we get on our bikes and firstly have some time to get familiar with the set up making any necessary adjustments. We then cycle to the spectacular fortified city of Ait Ben Haddou - 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. Our hotel is located a short walk from Ait Ben Haddou, allowing us to check in and freshen up then visit the site after the crowds have gone.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 38 kilometres (370 metres total accumulated ascent and 340 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
La Kasbah (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 Ait Ben Haddou 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. Dotted 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 2 hours.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 42 kilometres (460 metres total accumulated ascent and 340 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Kasbah Meteorites (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

This morning we drive 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 drive takes around 2 hours, we head to a remote part of Morocco that forms part of the stony hammada desert. Our first stop is Rissani where we have time to explore the Tuesday markets and mausoleum of Moulay Ali Cherif - great grandson of the founder of the Alaouite Dynasty. On the outskirts of the town we hop on our bikes and cycle along the desert road towards the imposing Erg Chebbi sand dunes. Once we arrive in Mergouza we swap our bikes for camels and go on an exciting camel trek to explore the contrasting and more classic desert landscape around 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. 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. The camel trek takes approximately 45 minutes and you can walk alongside your camel if you prefer. Our desert camp allows us to experience the tranquility of this desert setting. The camp comprises of a traditional goat hair tent separated into bedroom compartments of twin, double and single beds. Mattresses, blankets, towels and pillows are

provided. There is a wash block with three showers and three 'sit down' flushing toilets.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 37 kilometres (80 metres total accumulated ascent and 80 metres 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. Then we get back on our bikes and cycle to Erfoud. Today's cycle ride is in the Rissani region - homeland of the Alaouite dynasty, which reigned in this area for 300 years. Cycling through an expansive desert landscape, we will see people going about daily life and, depending on the time of year, you may see shepherds moving herds of goats and camels to higher ground for grazing in the summer months.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 54 kilometres (450 metres total accumulated ascent and 20 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:

Kasbah Tizimi (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

This morning, we set off by bus towards Tinerhir in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. We stop to see the ancient \ foggara\ subterranean irrigation system and learn how this ancient system provided water for the surrounding villages. After about 2 hours on the bus we get on our bikes and cycle through a lush oasis, abundant with date palms, olive groves, fruit orchards and almond trees, all scattered through a fertile landscape of grain and vegetable crops. Once arriving at Tinerhir we have one climb to a great viewpoint before a free wheel down to the Todra Gorge - renowned as one of the most spectacular canyons in the region. 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 before continuing 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 for this second section is about 1 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 locally famous Festival of the Roses, before being processed into rosewater and sold throughout the Islamic world.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 43 kilometres (880 metres total accumulated ascent and 20 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Ksar Kaissar (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Ride down through the Atlas Mountains; 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. This journey takes around 2 and a half hours. 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 for a drive of around 2 hours back to Marrakech, arriving late in the afternoon.

Our total cycling distance is approximately 34 kilometres (170 metres total accumulated ascent and 1570 metres 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

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Marrakech.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Marrakech at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to depart from Marrakech Menara Airport (RAK), which is a 20 minute drive from the hotel depending on traffic.

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

Climate and 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.

Marrakech - Hammam GBP 20

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.

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 are 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 beds and all bedding is provided as well as towels should you wish to use the shower block.

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

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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 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 248 km over six days (an average of 41 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

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

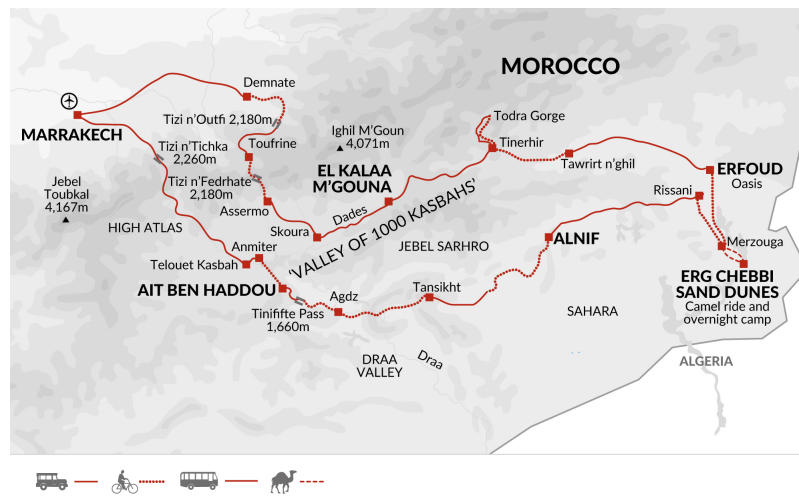
Bike information

Your included bike is a 11 gear Cannondale Off Road or Trail Mountain Bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. If you require an XS bike it will have 27 gears. A pannier bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own saddle and pedals 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**