

For tours departing beyond 2008, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2009 brochure (issued in May 09).

2008/9
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

SHORT BREAKS

MOROCCO Dossier Ref. SH

Saharan Escape

Issued 28 Apr 2008. Valid from 01 May 2008 to 31 Dec 2009

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

5 days/4 nights Land Only
Ouarzazate back to Ouarzazate

Join Ouarzazate on Thursday (day 1)

End Ouarzazate on Monday (day 5)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Ouarzazate. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

5 days/4 nights Tour including
Connecting Group Flights
London-Ouarzazate-London

Depart Thursday from London Heathrow Airport to join tour in Ouarzazate (day 1 of Land Only itinerary). Transfer to hotel.

Return Monday from Ouarzazate (day 5 of Land Only itinerary) and arrive London Heathrow the same day.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

Please Note: Christmas and New Year departures run on revised days of operation. Please refer to brochure, dates and prices panel, for full details.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this trip we mention:

- * **DRAA VALLEY** Scenic drive with ksour, kasbahs & oases.
- * **ZAGORA AREA** Explore Tamegroute village.
- * **TINFOU** Desert camp and chance of camel ride.
- * **CHEGAGA** Remote Saharan dunes by 4WD.

The BBC's book and series 'Wild Africa' introduces the Sahara perfectly: 'The Sahara is the world's greatest desert, stretching across northern Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea - 9 million sq. km of dunes, mountains and rocky

CO₂ Offsets Included

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with Explore is the CO₂ generated by your flights. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights forming part of the tour. Our chosen offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

plains'. On this short adventure break we won't quite cover the length and breadth of the 'Great Sahara' but we will most certainly experience real wilderness and contrasting desert landscapes. Our gateway to the Sahara lies at Ouarzazate, now served regularly by scheduled flight services. From here, specially equipped 4WD vehicles take us into the deep south of Morocco, towards the Algerian border and some of Morocco's largest dunes. We drive through the beautiful Draa Valley, dotted with kasbahs and lush oases and experience two nights camping wild in the desert. This is an unusual get-away-from-it-all long weekend with a difference. Come prepared for some bumpy off-road driving and basic camping nomad-style. If you are looking for a longer trip in southern Morocco why not consider our 9-day 'Kasbah Trail', Ref: KT.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day route published below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. For much of the trip we mainly travel on rough and little-used desert tracks and may have to alter our route if tracks are blocked or depending on weather, local conditions and the interest of the group.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Day 1. Thursday. Join tour Ouarzazate

Arrive in the desert outpost of Ouarzazate, at the edge of the Atlas Mountains and check-in at hotel. **Overnight hotel H+.**

Day 2. Drive to Tinfou Dunes via Draa Valley

We waste no time this morning and drive through the beautiful and fertile Draa Valley. Our route is lined with palm groves, with many kasbahs and ksours (villages) punctuating the impressive landscape. Tamnougalt ksour is possibly the most impressive and certainly worth a closer look during our journey. We arrive in the large village of Zagora, often referred to as the 'Gate of the Desert'. Zagora is essentially a vast oasis which stretches south for almost 30 km. Finally we drive to the dune at nearby Tinfou for our first night camping and a taste of the real desert. If you feel reasonably active it is usually possible to arrange a camel ride around the dune. **Overnight desert camp C (included meals B, L, D).**

Day 3. Desert drive to Chegaga Dunes

We awake to our first morning in the desert and usually a glorious orange sunrise. Hills

Earth Matters

- Explore is supporting the Imilil Village Association in sponsoring three girls from the High Atlas through secondary education. Visit our website for more information.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>



of sand stretch out to the horizon like an ever-shifting carpet. Smooth-sided, sharply-crested dunes, each much alike, mimic the regular waves of a sea. The Sahara is vast, awesome and very disorientating yet peaceful and therapeutic to the senses. We start with a drive to Tamegroute to visit its famous 17th century zaouia (a sanctuary built around a holy man's tomb), one of the most important in the Moroccan Sahara. We then aim to get off-the-beaten track in our fully equipped 4WD vehicles and head further into the desert, first to the area around Mhamid, close to the Moroccan border with Algeria. We'll spend the day driving through ever changing desert scenery. Here, in this inhospitable wilderness, the burning temperature of the sand causes a quivering of the air, blurring the edges of the landscape and giving rise to a 'mirage'. Keep a close eye out for camels, sometimes forming a 'caravan' trading perhaps in rock salt or dates. The Arabian camel is one of the best-adapted desert mammals and can live for 40 years. Valued greatly by nomadic Tuareg people as a means of transport, almost all parts of their body can be used. Tents are made from camel-hair cloth, dung is used as a fuel on cold desert nights and skin makes excellent leather. We'll stop several times during our journey today to explore the finer aspects of desert life and to enjoy magnificent desolation. Tonight we plan to camp near the dunes at Chegaga, the highest dunes in this part of Morocco. Your leader will take you on a short nature walk after setting up camp to look for trails of desert-dwelling birds, insects and other animal life. The highest diversity of all animal life in the Sahara is displayed by insects and a close inspection under a bush or near stones can reveal much about recent activities. After a hearty Berber-style meal, we enjoy a second night of tranquility sleeping under a blanket of twinkling stars set deep in an African night-sky. Rather than sleeping in tents, many travellers choose simply to sleep out in the open to watch for shooting stars and enjoy the sky. **Overnight desert camp C (included meals B, L, D).**

Day 4. Drive to Ouarzazate via Tazenakht

We continue our desert adventure to Foug-Zguid: the remoteness and stark contrasts of scenery more than make up for the bumpy journey. Later as road conditions improve we turn north towards Tazenakht and cross the Tizi Taguergoust (1640m) into a

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rugged landscape with a backdrop of high peaks. We arrive back in Ouarzazate in the afternoon for our last night in the relative comfort of a hotel. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals B, L).**

Day 5. Monday. Tour ends Ouarzazate (Included meals B).

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll also need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Moroccan Dirham.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend you take a mixture of cash and credit cards.

Where to Exchange: Hotels and bank in Zagora.

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in main towns/cities, though are often unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited to main towns and cities.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques can be difficult to exchange and are not recommended.

Additional information: Important note: Scottish bank notes, Australian dollar travellers cheques and cash are NOT accepted in Morocco.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 4 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 2 dinners are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Approximate meal costs are given below:

	UK	Morocco
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	£0.30
Soft Drink	0.80	0.35
Bottle of Beer	2.50	1.25
Bottle of Water	0.80	0.50
2 Course Meal*	10.00	4.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	6.00
Bottle of Wine	10.00	6.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Local Staff: In this part of Africa, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approx. £7-10 for tips for the drivers and any local guides used.

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Other Sightseeing

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.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

TINFOU DUNE Camel ride (1 hour) £7.00.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

In general, November to April is the winter season in Morocco, though conditions are much milder in the Anti-Atlas or southern region of the country. Day temperatures will probably be around 20-25°C, dropping at night to perhaps Zero to -5°C, although nights get warmer in March and April. The dry, hot season is from May to October when summer temperatures can reach 38°C and over (we will vary our sightseeing times to avoid the heat during this period).

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

Entry visas are **NOT** required by UK, AUS, NZ, USA & CAN citizens. Other nationalities should consult their travel agent or consular office.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, hepatitis A and tetanus. Check with your travel health clinic for latest advice regarding diphtheria.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before 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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency. If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip your tour leader will ask you to purchase an Explore Policy. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance.

Know Before You Go

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, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information booklet**', available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One piece of baggage (suitcases not suitable as luggage is stored on the roof-racks of our 4WD vehicles) and a daysac for the walks. Total allowance: **26lbs/12kgs** (due to weight restrictions on our vehicles).

Clothing: Pack essentially for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'.

Summer (Apr-Oct): Clothing should be lightweight. However, a warm sweater is also advisable, as the desert can sometimes be cold at night, even in the summer.

Winter (Nov-Mar): Mostly warm days but much thicker clothing is essential. It is advisable to take warm clothing (e.g. track suit) to sleep in, as the quality of heating in Moroccan hotel rooms can be variable. Desert nights can be particularly cold with ground frosts in winter. A windproof jacket, trousers and fleece are thus recommended between December and January.

Morocco is a Muslim country and people may be offended by shorts or revealing dresses, which can attract unwelcome attention. Therefore you should dress with respect for local sensibilities. Women should also cover their heads when entering a sanctuary, though in general, mosques are forbidden to non-Muslim.

Footwear: Lightweight walking or desert boots/shoes for general travel and sandals/trainers for relaxing.

Equipment: Bring a 3-season sleeping bag plus water bottle. A small torch and earplugs are highly recommended.

Personal First Aid Kit: For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

Booking a Single Room

All of our tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. On this particular tour we are pleased to be able to offer customers the option of pre-booking a guaranteed single on all nightstops.

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