

Oasis Morocco 2011

November 1st through November 15th, 2011

Oasis Dance Camp returns to Morocco! We begin with six full days based in Marrakech at the luxurious Riad Karmela. Morning classes with *Cassandra* and afternoons of exploration and tours of this enchanted city will alternate with day trips to the town of Essaouira and village of Imlil. "Camp" week will end with a special dinner show featuring the Oasis Campers. Our second week will be focused on the southern desert where we will stay at a nomadic camp in the dunes of the Sahara. We have plans for music and dance each evening and day trips to nearby villages and sites.

The complete itinerary from Addi, our tour guide from Moroccan Caravan follows:



The Caravan is going back to Morocco, taking Oasis Dance Camp's participants on another special journey and exploration of Moroccan dance, arts and culture. This trip is a real chance for participants to see the complexity and diversity of Morocco, a country that has the Atlantic Ocean to its west, the Mediterranean Sea to its north, the Atlas mountain ranges in its center, and the vast open Sahara to its south. It has long been the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, and West Africa, and its geographic diversity is matched by its cultural diversity. Imazighen, also called Berbers, Romans, Arabs, Jews, West Africans, and Europeans have all influenced the arts and culture of Morocco. This tour provides participants with the unique opportunity to meet with locals and visit the historical, cultural, and artistic centers of Morocco. Time spent in the Saharan region of southeastern Morocco introduces participants to the Berber nomadic lifestyle. Participants take camel rides across the sand dunes and experience special moments under the brilliant stars of the Sahara. You will also be treated to musical and dance performances along the way.



Itinerary

November 01 Depart the US from JFK



Participants will gather at JFK Airport in New York To catch the Royal Air Maroc International flight to Casablanca.

November 02 – Casablanca - Marrakech

Morning arrival at Mohammed V Airport in Casablanca. The group will visit the magnificent Hassan II mosque before a light lunch by the ocean and then transfer to Marrakech. Stay at the magnificent Riad Karmela, beautifully decorated in traditional Moroccan style. Dinner in the Riad's garden then go up on the rooftop for dessert and tea. **(L, D)**



November 03 Marrakech



Dance class 9:00 – 1:00
1:45 Addi shows the way to navigate from the Riad to the Square, and then to Oscars Restaurant for lunch. After lunch, free time Marrakech to wander the square, the souk, etc..
7:30 Group dinner at one of the rooftop restaurants overlooking the square.
After dinner: wander around the square with all its evening lights and entertainment **(B, L, D)**

November 04 Marrakech

Dance class 9:00 – 1:00
Afternoon: tour of Bahia palace, Tiskiwin Museum and Saadian tombs.
Evening: Private dinner at the riad, and after dinner we will enjoy Sheikatt performance at the riad. **(B, D)**



November 05 Marrakech – Essaouira – Marrakech



We make a day trip to Essaouira, a beautiful laid back coastal town with its old ramparts and blue and white colored streets. We will make a stop at a local cooperative to learn about the famous argan oil and the process of making it. Essaouira is also home for the Thuya wood making and we will make a visit to an amazing factory to witness what the artisans can do! Lunch with Gnawa women who will present a very special Gnawa women's performance. Sunset on the beach then drive back to Marrakech. Overnight at Riad Karmela **(B, L)**

November 06 Marrakech

Dance class 9:00 – 1:00

Group afternoon visit of Marrakech.



Make sure you save some energy because the evening will include a dinner show with music, dance and Fantasia horse show by many folkloric groups. Each group represents a different area of the country. **(B, D)**

November 07 Day trip to Imlil village in the Toubkal Mountains - Marrakech



Day trip up to the Amazigh (Berber) village of Imlil in the Atlas Mountains. A national park area with many valleys. Lunch in Imlil. Hike by the Berber villages on the way up into the Toubkal Mountains until we reach a holy shrine locally believed to house the king of the *jinn*. The movie *Kundun* was filmed here. Late afternoon return to Marrakech. **(B, L)**

November 08 Marrakech

Dance class 9:00 – 1:00

Afternoon: free time to explore and/or do some shopping. Evening dinner and Oasis Dance Camp Show in raid. **(B, D)**



November 09 Ouarzazate



Leave Marrakech and head east crossing the High Atlas Mountains through the path of pastures known by locals as the Tizi n Tichka. This is a ride full of breath-taking views of the Atlas Mountains and Amazigh (Berber) villages (this road is called “The Road of 1000 Kasbahs”). We will make a stop at the world heritage site Kasbah Ait Ben Haddou for a visit then continue to Ouarzazate for overnight at a charming family-owned hotel. Dinner and Overnight at Riad Darchamaa **(B, D)**

November 10 Sahara Desert/Camp

Today we continue east to the Sahara Desert, passing through the Dades and Todra valleys and to the Oasis of Tafilalet until we reach the Golden Sand dunes of Erg Chebi. Here our home will be in a nomadic camp in the dazzling sand dunes. Dinner the camp with music by two local brothers who are reknown as wedding performers. **(B, D)**



November 11 Sahara Desert/Excursion



Exploration of the area by 4x4 Jeeps. The tour will provide an overview of Amazigh life in this area, which was on the trans-Saharan caravan route. We will learn about the old system used to get water for gardens in the oasis. We will also make a stop at a Neolithic rock art site. Picnic lunch. Late afternoon caravan camel ride to watch sunset on the dunes. Dinner with Saharan Gnawa and other local music and dance at the camp **(B, L, D)**

November 12 Rissani & Tafilalet Oasis/Excursion

Visit to the town of Rissani in the Oasis of Tafilalet where the group will go to a hammam just like locals. A special Medfuna lunch will be served in Rissani. Afternoon return to our camp for a workshop on guedra and ahidus with Fatima. In the evening, Fatima will dance accompanied by Saharan singers. We will also see a special ahidus dance. **(B, L, D)**



November 13 Trip to a local mud brick village



Visit to the village of Mezguida to learn about traditional village life. We will spend time with family and participate in cooking. We will even learn how to make a perfect glass of Moroccan mint tea - - Saharan style!



After lunch we will sit on the roof, have mint tea, and do henna and needle work with women from the village. At the end of the day will be back at the camp for an evening of Saharan Amazigh music and dance around the fire. **(B, L, D)**

November 14 Ouarzazate.



After a leisurely breakfast at the dunes, we head west to Ouarzazate. This route will go through the Draa Valley with many adobe villages in a large palm grove, arriving at Ouarzazate. Group fare well dinner at the Kasbah Riad Darchamaa **(B, L, D)**

November 15

Fly out of Ouarzazate to Casablanca to connect to Royal Air Maroc flight to JFK.
Bon voyage!!

The price includes:

- International two way group flight from (JFK) New York to (CMN) Casablanca and to Ouarzazate and back to (CMN) Casablanca then to (JFK) New York.
- Assistance at the Airports in JFK New York and CMN Casablanca.
- 1st class private air-conditioned bus transportation during the tour.
- Visit to Hassan II mosque in Casablanca upon arrival and transfer to Riad Karmela, Marrakech.
- Charming accommodations as indicated in the itinerary.
- Five nights in Berber Nomadic tents in the Sahara Desert.
- Admission to visited historical sights during the guided group tour.
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary, excluding drinks.
- (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner).
- Tips for luggage porters during the tour.
- Addi Ouadderrou as tour leader and manager assuring our day to day activities run smoothly.
- Visit to a family's house and tour of a mud brick village in southern Morocco.
- Visit to a local hammam in Rissani.
- Private Land Rover(s) with chauffeur(s) for a ride into the Sahara Desert.
- Sunset camel ride.
- Specially cooked dinners in the desert with musical performances.
- Exclusive music and dance performances in the Sahara.
- Farewell dinner in Ouarzazate.
- Our full assistance.
- And many unique surprises!

The price does not include:

- Travel insurance which can cover you overseas is required
- Passport fees and related paper work
- Excess baggage charges, telephone, laundry, room service, any personal and medical expenses.
- Tips for tour bus driver and assistant.

Moroccan Caravan Tours Travel Tips**Passports and Visas**

U.S. citizens do not need a visa but a valid passport is necessary. If you are from outside the U.S., please contact the Moroccan Consulate nearest to you to find out if you need a visa to enter Morocco.

Money Concerns

The dirham is the unit of currency in Morocco. There is typically between 7 and 7 1/2 and 8 dirhams to the dollar (depending on the exchange rate). Money can be changed easily in hotels and banks. ATM machines are common but will typically recommend that people bring both ATM cards and traveler's checks in size of \$100.00 are recommended to minimize the changing fees. Traveler's checks are good incase there is a problem with one of these forms of currency (your ATM card does not work, etc.). Tipping is recommended at restaurants and other

places that cater to tourists. Remember to let your bank know that you will be traveling to Morocco so they do not refuse your credit card purchases.

Voltage

The voltage used Morocco is 220 volts, 50 Hz. Two-pin round plugs. (The U.S. and Canada use 110/120 volts). You can purchase a converter at most hardware stores in Canada for appliances that do not switch to 220V. Also don't forget adaptors that you can use to transform the flat pins on your plugs to round pins that you will need in Morocco..

Health

No inoculations are necessary to travel to Morocco from the U.S. We recommend that you consult with your health care provider before traveling. To prevent traveler's diarrhea, avoid drinking tap water and eating raw fruits and vegetables. I recommend that travelers buy the safe inexpensive bottled water commonly available in Morocco (a one liter bottle costs approximately 50 U.S. cents). Since your stomach may still become upset due to the change in diet, bring anti-diarrhea medicine just in case. For the latest overseas travel health information, visit the Center for Disease Control's web site at www.cdc.gov.

Communication

It is not possible to make collect calls from Morocco to the US. Calling cards can also be difficult to use and can be costly. I recommend you check with your phone company before you travel to find out their rates. The cheapest way to call from Morocco to the US is to use the numerous teleboutiques. Another good idea is to leave the addresses and phone numbers of your hotels with family and friends so they can call you. Of course, you can also call the US from your hotel but this is more expensive than the teleboutique. Internet service is common and it is easy to send and check your email from Morocco.

Climate / Clothing

Morocco's climate is Mediterranean in the north and sub-tropical in the south. Dress is casual, even in the major cities. . Some religious sites do not allow shorts or sleeveless shirts. Outside of religious sites you are fine. We recommend that expensive jewelry be left at home. Comfortable shoes are recommended. Hiking shoes if program involves hiking. The sun is beautiful in Morocco and sunglasses are a must. Try not to over pack and bring too many clothes. You are certain to buy many souvenirs in Morocco and will regret if you arrive with over packed suitcases. Easy to care for wash and wear clothes are the best. Hotels have laundry service where your clothing can be washed and pressed for a modest fee.

Idea on Temperatures in Morocco around the year:

11 C/ 50F in January, 13 C/ 55F in February, 16 C/ 61F in March, 19 C/ 66F in April, 21C/ 70F in May, 25C/ 77F in June, 32 C/ 90F in July, 35 C/ 95F in August, 25 C/ 77F in September, 21 C/ 70F in October, 16 C/ 61F in November, 12 C/ 54F in December

Idea on Rain in Morocco around the year:

30 mm in January, 30 mm in February, 30 mm in March, 30 mm in April, 17 mm in May, 7 mm in June, 2 mm in July, 3 mm in August, 10 mm in September, 20 mm in October, 30 mm in November, 35 mm in December.

Shopping

Shopping is wonderful in Morocco. Morocco is renowned for its Berber jewelry, handwoven carpets, leather goods, fine metalwork, and decorative pottery. Prices are rarely fixed so be prepared to have fun bargaining for the best price. You may wish to avoid the street vendors, some of whom can be very aggressive. Saharan areas tend to have some unique stuff and better prices.

Language

Arabic is the official language. Tamazight (Berber) is the native language. French is widely spoken. English and Spanish are less common but it is not unusual to find people who speak these languages.

Traveler's Checklist

1. Pre-departure planning & Essentials:

- Check with the airline you are flying with to find out the baggage weight limit allowed. Airlines currently charge an extra fee each time bags are checked in with that airline.
- Personal Identification
- Passport
- Visa to get into the country (if needed)
- Transportation Tickets
- Credit Cards (ATM machines are readily available in Morocco but I recommend people use a combination of traveler's checks and ATM cards in case there is a problem with one of these)
- Traveler's Checks are ok but they are less and less accepted these days
- Currency (some cash to exchange in banks)
- Insurance
- Health Documentation
- Emergency Information
- Maps
- Photocopies of Documentation: (passport and tickets)

2. Medicines

- Take medicine with you for pre-existing ailments
- Antibiotic for traveler's diarrhea
- Pepto-Bismol tablets or Loperamide (Imodium) for traveler's diarrhea. Do not take Pepto-Bismol if you take aspirin. These are just ideas but you must check with your doctor to be sure of what's better for you.
- Motion sickness medicine
- Cold medicine: Decongestant, antihistamine, cough syrup
- Tylenol and other Pain relievers
- Hydrocortisone cream
- Insect repellent with DEET 30%
- Antibiotic cream & disinfectant for scrapes and cuts
- Band aids
- Sunscreen, both UVA and UVB protection; use highest possible protection (at least SPF 15)
- Sunglasses
- Extra glasses, extra contact lenses and eyeglass prescription

- Birth control stuff
- Feminine hygiene stuff (tampons, etc.)
- Disposable antibacterial wipes or cleanser (washing hands frequently and before eating greatly helps reducing transmission of germs that can cause illness)
- List of medicines, purpose, and dosage

3. Basics

- Travel Clothing (Light easy wash and wear for Summer)
- Travel Footwear
- Brimmed Hat, Visor, Hat
- Camera & extra memory cards and or film
- Video Camera & Tapes or other
- Extra Camera Batteries
- Battery charger
- Electrical plug adapter and or converter
- Radiation shield for film
- Travel ID tags. Also put a paper with your name and contact info inside your checked in luggage.
- Travel lock approved by TSA
- Travel Alarm
- Flashlight (travel size) / extra bulbs
- Travel Journal
- Address book
- Money / Passport Carrier
- If you want, bring pens you may have around the house or office if you want to hand them to children in the villages or give them to the school there.

Enjoy your trip!

Oh... one last detail... don't forget to bring your smile and your sense of humor.