

MOROCCO, MARRAKECH AND CASABLANCA



Date: 26 September – 12 October 2010

Type of Tour: Mountains & Lakes, Adventure, Long Distance

Our trips to Morocco have become a firm favourite with World of BMW customers over the years. This magical 17-day tour will take you on a voyage through the Andalusian and Atlas Mountains, the Sahara desert, fortified villages, Berber castles and old Foreign Legion outposts. Several nights will be spent in luxury hotels with lavish surroundings, others in authentic Bedouin tents, sleeping under the desert stars.

Morocco is brimming with colour, mystery and sights that will have you catching your breath in wonder. On arrival you are plunged into a culture and lifestyle utterly unlike anything that you may have experienced before; a mystery tour of a land of endless

diversity, surprises, enchantment and enduring fascination. The ride through Spain and back is also a major part of this adventure. For those who have previously joined this tour, it is worth noting that this year's trip will feature some new destinations from previous years. And no Moroccan tour would be complete without a traditional Desert Experience, complete with camel rides, Bedouin tents, feasts and dancing.

Day 1 (26 September) – Plymouth to Santander

The tour group will assemble in Plymouth and take the overnight crossing to Santander. Twin-berth, en suite cabins have been booked for both crossings. Solo riders will be asked to share, as there are no single cabins. (It is possible to request cabin upgrades or sole occupancy of a twin cabin which will be subject to availability and a supplement)

Once on board, with the bikes secured and everyone changed

out of their bike gear, there will be a group meeting for introductions and a detailed briefing on the tour ahead – with particular emphasis on the riding plans in Spain and Morocco. There is a wide range of services on board, with shops, bars, lounges, restaurants, cinemas and sun decks available for your enjoyment.

Day 2 (27 September) – Santander to Salamanca

Upon arrival at the port of Santander, the tour will disembark and head south on the suggested route through Cantabria, past Valladolid, with refreshment stops en route. Continuing south we will reach our first overnight venue of Salamanca. Here en suite accommodation has been reserved in a central hotel. The hotel is just two minutes walk from the impressive Plaza Mayor, where you can seek out the restaurant of your choice for dinner. (Mileage: 225)

Day 3 (28 September) – Salamanca to Seville

We will leave Salamanca shortly after breakfast for a long day in the saddle. We will follow a route south, across the Sierra de Gredos, and through the great plains of Spain. The day's riding concludes with a ride towards Andalucia, and our next overnight stop. Tonight's accommodation has been reserved at a splendid Parador, situated a few miles outside Seville. The Parador, sitting high on a hill with incredible views over the surrounding plains, has a pool. There will be time for a relaxing dip before dinner, which will be a group affair tonight and is included. (Mileage: 320)

Day 4 (29 September) – Seville to Ceuta

Today we will leave Seville and enjoy a leisurely ride south to Morocco, via Ronda and some fabulous roads through the Andalusian Mountains. We'll then catch the fast ferry crossing from Algeciras, close to Gibraltar, to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. The tour hotel is another luxury Parador close to Ceuta. All the rooms are well appointed, as you would expect, and there is a pool for an end-of-day dip. Dinner tonight will be another group affair for everyone in the Parador. (Mileage: 150)

Day 5 (30 September) – Ceuta to Fes

After breakfast we will leave Ceuta (and Europe!) before crossing the Moroccan border, just 5 minutes down the road.

Africa here we come!

Once clear of the inevitable paperwork, document checks,

embarkation forms and official stamps, we will collect our back up vehicle. We'll then continue the ride over northern Morocco's Rif Mountains and on to Fes, which can justifiably claim to be the most complete medieval city still in existence. Its warren of alleys and streets contain a working model of the way life used to be lived in Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad when the world was embryonic. Tonight's accommodation is at a four star hotel overlooking the Medina. The hotel has large gardens, a pool, sun terrace, fitness centre and three restaurants. This evening's dinner is included, once again. (Mileage: 195)

Day 6 (01 October) – Fes to Erfoud

The high Atlas mountain range marks the last frontier before we cross to the sands of the desert. Here is a forgotten world of fortified villages (ksour), Berber castles (Kasbahs) and old Foreign Legion outposts. Once, they were the all-important staging posts on the camel routes that tied Marrakech to the great trading capitals of the Sahara, with their gold and slaves from Timbuktu. It is an awesome land of breathtaking mountains through which the rivers Draa and Dades have driven two thin wedges of fertility, as enticing as any mirage. Leaving Fes we will continue our ride over the Atlas Mountains to Erfoud, where accommodation has been reserved at a luxurious four star hotel in a stunning location for any tour to rest! This splendid

hotel has rooms decorated in the traditional Moroccan style, a pool, Turkish baths, a shop selling local goods and comfortable public rooms. Dinner will be in the hotel. (Mileage: 288)

Day 7 (02 October) – Desert Experience

The first part of the day will be free for you to relax and enjoy the surroundings. For any riders wishing to see some of the desert, the Tour Leader will be happy to assist. Later you will be transferred to the edge of the desert in a 4x4 escort, before riding to a Bedouin camp by camel. Accommodation will be in deluxe Bedouin tents and there will be an evening of traditional Moroccan entertainment, including a BBQ feast, music and dancing around the campfire.

Day 8 (03 October) – Erfoud – Free day

After a Bedouin breakfast we will make our way back to the hotel, again by camel and 4x4. You are then free for the rest of the day, to explore the surrounding area or try out some of the more adventurous pursuits on offer. The hotel offers a range of activities from camel rides and 4x4 drives through the desert landscape, to off-road and quad bikes. Alternatively, those preferring to spend the day at a more relaxed pace, can make the most of the hotel pool and facilities.

Day 9 (04 October) – Erfoud to Ouarzazate

Today we will depart Erfoud and ride to Ouarzazate (pronounced

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War-za-zat), via Todra Gorge and Dades Valley. The Dades Valley is a bleak, Wild West land with snow on one side and semi-desert on the other – an Old Testament wilderness whose savage grandeur and unearthly silence can only be equalled by the Grand Canyon.

The road to Ouarzazate passes between hundreds of Kasbahs (small villages) that line the Dades Valley on the route from the Todra Gorge at Tineghir; this is a spectacular ride through a stunning desert landscape, villages, palm groves, and the Jebel Sargho lunarscape to the south. At El Kelaa des M'gouna, there are hedges of wild roses. At Boumalne, if time permits, we can take an excursion through the dramatic landscape of the Dades Gorges; and at Tineghir, we can ride north for 13 miles and enter the breath-taking Todra Gorge.

The trip through the splendid Todra River valley road takes us through luxuriant ribbons of palm and olive groves, almond and pomegranate trees and patchworks of tiny crop fields. We also pass a number of pink-grey villages before entering the mouth of the Todra Gorge – a canyon 1,000 ft high, cut into the pink and green walls of the High Atlas. The actual Todra Canyon is only a few hundred yards long. Beyond, a new road would take us deep into the high Atlas, but to continue further an off-road vehicle is essential.

Today's final destination, Ouarzazate, is the most

important of the southern towns and is strategically located at the crossroads to the Deep South and Timbuktu (52 days camel ride away). For this evening accommodation has been reserved at a hotel overlooking the town, with perfect views across the horizon to the mountains. The old Kasbah is just a three minute walk down the hill. All rooms have en suite facilities and are traditionally decorated. There is an outdoor pool to enjoy and dinner will once again be a group event in the hotel. (Mileage: 195)

Day 10 (05 October) – Ourzazate to Marrakesh

Destination Marrakech! Approximately 20 miles north on the road to Marrakech is the town of Ait Benhaddou, which is famous as a movie film set. Films such as Lawrence of Arabia, Sodom and Gomorrah, Gladiator and Jesus of Nazareth were all filmed here. The approach to the north is memorable – leaving the stunning landscape of Ouarzazate, the road corkscrews up through the Atlas to an altitude of 7,400 feet at the Col de Tichka. The ride to Marrakech is also spectacular. Our hotel is another luxurious four star venue, centrally located with extensive gardens. The spacious rooms all have air conditioning and are en suite. There is a pool to cool off before dinner, which is included. (Mileage: 125m)

Day 11 (06 October) – Free day in Marrakech
Marrakech – and a free day to

relax or explore. By far the best way to tour Marrakech is to engage one of the 300 horse-drawn carriages (caleches). They will take you on a ride of discovery, in comfort and style. But to see the marvels of Marrakech's Medina – all two square miles of it – you must go on foot and it is best to hire a 'guide' for the day.

It is in the hurly-burly of the Medina where you will find the masterpieces of Marrakech art. Each craft in the Medina has its own special quarter, in one of the interminable passages that sprawls like some vast living organism, teeming with activity. There are two or three main thoroughfares in the Medina, off which branch most of the individual markets with alleys and squares. These are devoted to specific crafts, where one can watch many of the local traders plying their skills; whether that be dyeing, brass and copper beating, apothecary stalls, cosmetics, herbs, jewelers, leather workers, carpenters, sieve-makers, perfumes, spices or slipper makers.

No visit to Marrakech would be complete without a stop at Djemaa el Fna, Marrakech's pulsating main square and one of the world's great theatres. The Djemaa is a spectacular pageant of singers, tumblers, sorcerers, herbalists, raconteurs, preachers and snake charmers, all competing for your eye. There is nowhere else in Africa, which so effortlessly involves you, and will keep you returning.

At the end of another truly memorable day, we will reconvene at the hotel where dinner will be another group affair.

Day 12 (07 October) – Marrakech to Rabat – via Casablanca

Today we will leave Marrakech and head north across the coastal plains, first to stop in Casablanca. The city, which is Morocco's economic capital, continues to develop at an astonishing rate, with traffic, noise and building work. Although famous in Hollywood movie legend, not one scene from the film was shot within a thousand miles of Casablanca! After pausing for some sightseeing we will continue north, along the coast to Rabat, for the next overnight stay. The city was founded in the 10th century, near the Roman port of Sala Colonia, and is home to one of the greatest of all Islamic monuments in north Africa, the Tour Hassan. Accommodation tonight has been reserved at another quality four star hotel and dinner will again be included. (Mileage: 240)

Day 13 (08 October) – Rabat to Ceuta

Today our route will continue north along the coast before swinging inland towards Souk-el-Arba du-Rharb. Then another run across the Rif Mountains towards Tetouan and back to Ceuta. Tonight, our last night on African soil, we will again stay at the Parador and enjoy a final Moroccan dinner together. (Mileage: 210)

Day 14 (09 October) – Ceuta to Cordoba

After breakfast we will leave the Parador and catch the return ferry to Spain. If you thought there were no more treats in store, then think again! Today we will enjoy another fantastic ride through the Andalusian Mountains, providing a final glimpse of Africa and in the foreground, the rock of Gibraltar. Tonight, the tour party will stay at another four star hotel in Cordoba, where accommodation has been reserved with en suite rooms. For dinner tonight you are free to choose from the hotel restaurant or the restaurants in the city. (Mileage: 190)

Day 15 (10 October) – Cordoba to Segovia

After an early breakfast we will leave the city and head across the vast plains of central Spain, riding towards tonight's destination in the splendid city of Segovia, north of Madrid. Here we will stay at a hotel situated within the old city walls and close to all the main attractions. All the rooms are air-conditioned and have en suite. Dinner tonight will be in the town at your own choice of restaurant. (Mileage: 320)

Day 16 (11 October) – Segovia to Santander

Another early start, as we depart Segovia and set off on a fast ride across northern Spain, through Burgos and Cantabria, to Santander. From here we will catch the overnight ferry

for Portsmouth. Once again, twin-berth, en suite cabins have been booked for our crossing. Tonight you are free to enjoy a last meal on board, doubtless re-living the events of the past two weeks! (Mileage: 280)

Day 17 (12 October) – Arrival back in Portsmouth

Arrival back in Portsmouth is at approximately 17:00hrs, ready for farewells and the ride home.

Rider Price: £2,199
Couple Price: £2,975

Tour includes: return ferry with cabin accommodation both ways, return ferry from Algeciras; B&B accommodation in Salamanca, Cordoba and Segovia, halfboard, in the following locations: one night in Seville, Fes, Ouarzazate and Rabat, two nights in Ceuta, Erfoud and Marrakech; the Desert Experience; all the necessary maps and route details; travel pack; local parking charges; a World of BMW Tour Leader to accompany the group; back up vehicle with the group in Morocco; and VAT.

Not included are: fuel; lunches; meals, other than those specified; wine with dinner; any tolls or admissions; local entertainments not included in the programme; travel insurance.

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