

# Moorish Delights of Andalusia and Morocco

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A long time ago a kingdom existed where the Three Peoples of the Book lived together and created a culture of incredible beauty. These were the Muslim, Jewish and Christian Moorish people of Andalusia in Southern Spain and Morocco.

On this journey we will have a chance to trace a little of their history through some of the beautiful remains left behind: incredible architecture, gardens to equal those of paradise, delicious food and music.

In Morocco Africa is more strongly comes into the mix and a rich layer of textile culture is still to be seen– think Magic carpets, softest leathers, rich embroidery... A feast of impressions, splendid palaces, rich carpets, labyrinth like markets or souks, Medinas or walled cities, deserts and oasis, old Kasbahs; the famed Imperial cities, Roman ruins and off the beaten track to some of the smaller, colourful local markets, sunset and then sunrise in the Sahara desert are all to be visited.

Inspired by Moorish splendour we will work on a travel journal as a record of our observations and the inspirations arising- a piece of work that will potentially stand alone as an art work and certainly be a recourse for future inspiration. A small sketch book, handful of pencils or paints and/or some swatches of cloth to stitch a sketch [the silk seller in the market has a whole rainbow of threads!] and digital camera- a small handful of tools to capture so much! We will have it sit around the campfire on the edge of the Sahara to experience Berber music and dancing, wander the maze of alleys in the old cities, sit in café's with sangria and watch the locals pass and snack on delectable treats along the way!

Oh the sacrifices one sometimes makes for their artistic development! Something to think about...John Ruskin pointed out the importance of sketching when travelling is not to become a great artist rather it is about taking the time to look and really observe, really notice where you are. [I don't see myself as much of a drawer so call it making diagrams to catch ideas and am so much more relaxed about it- hey call it what makes you comfortable!] Watch yourself when you are somewhere new- if you just click with a camera what is your experience? If you sat for a moment and made a quick doodle/ sketch/ diagram [depending on the word you are comfortable with] what would your experience of the location be like? Let us use a combination of the two.

If you can, do try and read these, they really set the scene

--- "A Handful of Honey" by Annie Hawes

---"Leo of Africa" by Amin Maalouf

---"Tales of the Alhambra" by Washington Irving

---"The Little Prince" Antoine de Saint Exupéry – an imagination of what might be out there in the Sands...

**Cost – ?**

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**Day 1– Sunday,** Madrid  
Madrid is rich with wonder and beauty, you might like to arrive a few days early to explore and take advantage of being here. People came from many directions last time– easiest if we meet at the hotel– will supply details upon booking.

**Day 2–Monday,** Madrid –Cordoba  
An early start and onto our bus for Cordoba, arriving in the middle of the day we can drop our bags, have lunch and head to the Tower across the river- it houses a great museum of the story of Andalusia, Later the fabulous Mezquita; originally a mosque, a cathedral was built over it...this is the fabled building with a forest of striped arches, it showcases the beauty that can arise when Muslim and Christian culture intermingle. Later we will meet up at an open air café for drinks and dinner, it is the perfect spot to watch the locals take their evening promenade...perhaps we will follow suit before we retire for the night. [Breakfast, dinner]

**Day 3–Tuesday,** Cordoba-Granada  
If you like an early start it is lovely to wander the quiet streets before breakfast...a visit to Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos, this peaceful Fort has a dreaded history to be told...later after we have seen it in daylight! Then travel through the glorious countryside of olive groves, old castles and villages to Granada. We will wander down to the Capella Real, final resting place of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain then soak up the local vibe for the afternoon before gathering later in the evening to act like the locals, wandering the tapas bars for a snack, a glass of wine or two, listen to the music and have a good laugh! [breakfast, tapas]

**Day 4–Wednesday,** Granada  
The Alhambra! This palace complex was built in the Muslim style to reflect paradise; elegant buildings, intricate mosaics and gardens full of scented flowers and sparkling water features– it must come very close. Our day will pan out depending on entrance times allotted to us, then we can spend time soaking up its

**Creative Arts Safaris** tours are – art and culture based with a hands-on, get out and about type attitude.

- all inclusive utilising good quality mid-range up to flash accommodation and excellent dining experiences – we look for atmospheric places to stay [off the beaten tourists trails where possible] always good, clean bathrooms, friendly service and comfortable rooms.
- groups of 8-16 participants

These trips are not traditional package tours, rather it's hoped we can travel as a group of friends; Creative Arts Safaris have done the research, sort out the workshops and make sure it runs smoothly; we all share our observations and knowledge along the way. [any info you pick up in preparation is easy to share with the group via email in the preparations time]

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beauty. In the evening we are free to daydream about it at dinner in an open air café and watch the people pass. [breakfast]

**Day 5**– Thursday, Granada-Tarifa  
So far we have been travelling at a cracking pace, today we move onto the little seaside village of Tarifa, a much slower pace and our launching point for Africa and Morocco. Tarifa is the most southerly point in Europe; we will be able to walk out on a sand spit and have the Atlantic Ocean lapping on our right hand side and the Mediterranean Sea on our left. Wander the old town and relax. Great place to sketch the view or just dream of Africa, we can see Morocco across the water. [breakfast, dinner]

**Day 6**– Fri, Tarifa-Chefchouen/ Morocco  
An early ferry and we leave Europe behind and head to mystical Africa. Crossing the Straits of Gibraltar we reach Morocco, landing at Tangiers we will be met by our Moroccan crew. Climbing into our a/c vehicle we will wind our way up into the picturesque Rif Mountains and the quaint little village of Chefchouen, a perfect start to Moroccan life. [breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 7**– Fez  
Off to Fez today and along the way we will visit the fabulous Roman ruins at Volubilis, reaching our hotel later in the afternoon. [breakfast, lunch, dinner]

### Notes

**Weather** at this time of year definitely warm, the good news is we travel in an air-conditioned mini-bus, it can be cool in the evenings...saying that we had snow on the mountains last year- so bring a jacket as well.

**Clothing** - lightweight cotton clothing is good- to respect local customs best for skirts or trousers to be mid-calf length at least, tops short sleeves, not too revealing. Light, loose layers work well with the climate. Generally I find 3 or 4 outfits sufficient, there is always the opportunity to pick up things along the way. Pack a pair of socks and cardigan for the cool of the morning.

### Sun Hat?

**Shoes**- sensible walking shoes. Surfaces are often rough and you really want your footing stable so you can focus on all the wonderful things everywhere to look at!

**Money** ATMs are everywhere so you can use a travel card or visa debit or credit advance easily. If you plan to use a card overseas DO warn your bank to expect overseas activity- some will freeze the card wondering what is happening.

**Camera** we have a laptop so can download your pictures onto a memory stick [ don't forget your connection leads and stick]

**Power** 240 volts, European adaptor plugs necessary

**Begging?** Is generally not to be encouraged, giving gifts of pens and lollies to children is encouraging them to learn a begging mentality [if you like to give a gift to children we can hand it onto a school]. A dirham or two for a very old person is kind.

**Tippling?** Have a few dirhams in your pocket for small services eg bags into and out of hotel, dinner etc. If you receive a personal service eg cup of tea through room service, laundry delivery it is also customary to give a small tip. If you enjoy the commentary of a guide or a performance a tip is a good idea. Set something aside for our driver- he will take us safely and comfortably through the adventure of many exciting roads. One of the 5 Pillars of Islam is to feed the poor and frail, a few dirhams in Morocco for elderly or disabled people is very kind in a land without Social Security.

**Step lightly on our environment**, be frugal in water use, turn off power switches, and take rubbish with you where possible. **Say NO to Plastic!** please bring a carry bag for your shopping .

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**Day 8**– Sunday, Fez  
Fez or should I write FEZ! The oldest of the Imperial Cities, this ancient city has always been regarded as the region's religious and cultural centre of Morocco. Its 9th Century Old City- Fez el-Bali- is the oldest living, breathing, functioning Medieval Islamic city in the world. Hicham [our man in Fez] will take us to the Medina today, and reveal such delights as the history of Fez, the tanneries and some of the wonderful monuments and souks will be uncovered. Lunch will be in the Medina...and an afternoon to explore together. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 9**– Mon Fez  
We will start the day with a calligraphy lesson, a fine introduction to much we see around us...learn a few letters in Arabic, at least your name. Our enthusiastic hosts make this a fun exercise. Rest of the day is free. [inc- breakfast ]

**Day 10**– Tues Fez  
Today we will visit Sefrou, an hour or so outside Fez and spend time with the women of the Golden Button Co-operative and learn how to make buttons ourselves. [breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 11**– Wed Fez- Erfoud  
Breakfast early and then on the way over the mountains and a big drive through some truly magnificent scenery of the Middle Atlas Mountains and the Ziz River Valley to our staging post for the Sahara, Erfoud. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 12**– Thurs Erfoud– Sahara  
First we will head into Rissani and the busy local market, check out the donkey parking lot, the date market and other sights, along the road to Merzouga and the Sahara is an informative museum and shop highlighting the wonderful fossils found in abundance in the area, later we will visit a group of extraordinary musicians of the Gnaoua people. Sunset camel rides will be arranged from our doorstep- tonight we sleep at the foot of the dunes in a lovely Auberge. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 13**–Fri Merzouga- Dades Gorge  
We'll head off to visit Todra Gorge after following the Valley of 1000 Kasbahs. When you arrive you will be gob-smacked at the sensational scenery but also might feel a touch of déjà- vu -this is quintessential adventure country from many an exciting movie- we just need whip cracking and fast moving horses rushing by! Berber villages and palm trees dot the landscape. Home tonight will be high up in the Dades Valley [breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 14**– Sat, Dades Gorge -Ait Benhaddou  
Slow start to the day....all local villages weave carpets...we can visit one up the road this morning and then wander down the valley where we hope to meet up with local artist Fatima Mellal if she is home. [www.fatimamellal.net](http://www.fatimamellal.net) . Roses have made El-Kelaa famous throughout the Middle East and we are passing through just at the start of rose season, should smell good as we head further down the Valley of 1000 Kasbahs through desert, past palm groves, oasis and ancient forts or Kasbahs. As we pass through Ouzazate we'll spot where they made the movies Gladiator, Mummy I & II, Kingdom of Heaven and many others came to life. You might remember our stop tonight from Gladiator. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 15**-Sun, Ait Benhaddou-Marrakech  
This village has been seen in many a movie, sunrise is a magical time to wander down and cross the river to look around. Then off to Marrakech, we arrive in time to wander through the Djemma el-Fna before a fabulous dinner cooked by the ladies who run our riad. This amazing market place has been declared by UNESCO to be of world cultural importance for Oral Traditions and Performances. Keep a handful of coins in your pockets to give the many performers. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 16- Mon**

Marrakech

A wander through the souq to The Musée de Marrakech and Ben Youssef Medersa. After the early tantalizing meander through the souks, there is free time to explore before Djemma el-Fna starts to come alive- it is a great place to choose dinner from the hundreds of stalls or visit a nearby restaurant. Perhaps you would like a visit to the Hamman or bath house— an experience to be highly recommended. [inc- breakfast ]

**Day 17- Tue**

Marrakech

The Maison Tiskiwin this morning— its fabulous collection tells the story of the Berber people's from all around the Sahara [boy does it make you want to travel further!] and then join the women of Al Kawtar to sit and stitch...we'll work on a small piece and spend time with this inspiring self-help group [www.al-kawtar.com](http://www.al-kawtar.com)  
The afternoon and evening are free to wander the area, we will meet at our riad for dinner this evening.  
[breakfast ]

**Creative Arts Safaris  
tours include:**

**Note- we use train and bus in Spain- you need to be able to manage your suitcase, once we hit Morocco we have an AC bus.**

- For this tour we will meet at the designated start hotel
- Departures last day of tour are provided
- Accommodation from the evening of Day 1 up to and including the night of our Farewell Dinner. Our accommodation is generally mid-range. We use heritage type hotels where we can. All places are clean, friendly and have western bathrooms! It is ambiance and friendliness we are looking for.
- All transportation, road taxes and fuel costs for the tour
- All breakfasts and many other meals Food is a reflection of the culture and we are pleased to say we will sample a range of good dining experiences.
- Sightseeing entrance fees [which covers the use of a still camera]
- All tuition fees
- Tips for meals we provide, bags to the bus are included. See tipping in the notes section for tipping for personal requests or other tipping instances.

**You need to cover:**

- Some meals
- Drinks and bottled drinking water
- Laundry
- The one expense that we can't 'guestimate' for you is shop- ping! [this is not a shopping expedition but you will see some amazing things and you will probably want to indulge!]
- Airfares
- travel insurance
- visa [where necessary] Generally Moroccan visa is received on the ferry- dependent on country of your passport.

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**Day 18-Wed,**

Marrakesh/Casablanca

Slow start to the morning, we'll go to the bus around 10.30 am, swing by The Jardin Majorelle <http://www.jardinmajorelle.com> and associated museum and then head out to Casablanca. On this, our final day in Morocco, we will take a spin through Casablanca and view the Atlantic and then head along to Rick's Cafe for a drink...for those nostalgic about the movie Casablanca it is on the screen here in this elegant restaurant, a fitting setting for our farewell dinner [inc- breakfast, dinner]

**Day 19-**

Casablanca / Home

Departing from Mohammed V International Airport, Casablanca -we will organize airport transfers in time for your flights [inc- breakfast]

**An Old Berber saying...or two**

\*Trust in Allah, but tie up your camel first.

\* The dogs may bark, but the caravan passes on.

\* The heart, not the money, is the real force in the medina.

\* Love, pregnancy, and riding upon a camel cannot be hid.

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