

# Tapas and Tagines

## **DAY 1 – MARRAKECH (D)**

Our tour commences this evening amongst the snake charmers, musicians, street performers and henna artists in the quintessential Moroccan city, Marrakech. After our welcome meeting we will head to one of our favourite restaurants where you will be introduced to the delicious flavours of North African cuisine in an elaborate Moroccan banquet.

## **DAY 2 – MARRAKECH (B)**

This morning we will explore the myriad treasures of the Marrakech medina including the once majestic Palais el-Badi (it's name means 'the Incomparable!'), the Saadian Tombs, originally the final resting place of the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed and the Ali ben Youssef Medersa which marks the intellectual and religious heart of the medina. Keep an eye out today for the rich Andaloucian decoration that we will witness time and again throughout our journey north. This afternoon, why not shop for trinkets in the souk or perhaps enjoy the delights of a traditional hammam (bath).

## **DAY 3 - MARRAKECH – ESSAOUIRA (B) (L)**

Today we'll visit a small village on the outskirts of Marrakech where we'll meet an extraordinary chef who will teach us all the secrets of the Moroccan kitchen including how to cook some of the delicious fare we'll be eating throughout our trip. After all this hard work, it's time to devour the fruits of our labours! This afternoon we make our way to the seaside town of Essaouira.

## **DAY 4 – ESSAOUIRA (B)**

Originally an 18th century port town, Essaouira's waterfront locale and laid back attitude make it the perfect place to spend a day soaking up the atmosphere and strolling the picture-postcard ramparts as you enjoy some of the best gelato this side of Italy. This afternoon, why not live out that Arabian nights fantasy (well, sort of) as you take a camel ride along the soft sandy beach at sunset.

## **DAY 5 - ESSAOUIRA – CASABLANCA (B) (L)**

Today we are heading north to Casablanca via the stunning seaside town of Oualidia. With its golden sands and gorgeous crescent-shaped lagoon, this is sure to be an experience you won't easily forget! With a population of 4 million Casablanca is Morocco's largest city and also its most modern. Once we've settled into our hotel there is the opportunity to stroll the Corniche and perhaps enjoy a drink as the sun sets over the Atlantic. This evening it's a blast from the past with the option to head to Rick's Café of 'Casablanca' (the movie) fame where, as we enjoy dinner, we'll ask the pianist to 'play it again for me, Sam'.

**DAY 6 - CASABLANCA - RABAT – FES (B) (D)**

A trip to Casablanca wouldn't be complete without visiting one of the only mosques in Morocco open to non-Muslims: the Hassan II Mosque. A relative newcomer (it was completed in 1993), this mosque is amongst the largest mosques in the world (the sheer scale of the courtyard is jaw-dropping) and the finest artisans from across the country were commissioned to carry out the intricate detailing on everything from glass to woodwork and marble. Later, we head to Morocco's capital city, Rabat. We'll search for lunch down narrow streets lined with white-washed walls that open out to a breathtaking vista over the ocean. Free time to explore the laid-back souqs and stalls before making our way to Fes, our home for the next three nights.

**DAY 7 – FES (B) (D)**

The imperial city of Fes is, in our opinion, like no other city on earth. The medina is the largest living Islamic medieval city in the world and as you step through Bab Bou Jeloud (the main gate into the old city) you'll feel as though you've stepped back in time. Amongst the more than 10,000 streets you'll find all you could ever want and more: silver - and coppersmiths moulding metal into submission, tanneries producing butter-soft leather (don't worry, we've brought the mint to mask the smell), weavers, artisans, food stalls, everything. This evening we'll dine in a converted riad.

**DAY 8 - FES - MEKNES - VOLUBILIS – FES (B) (L)**

Fertile plains abundant with cereals, olives, citrus fruit and wine encircle the city of Meknes, which reached its pinnacle during the 17th century when Sultan Moulay Ismail set out to make Meknes the equal of its' European counterpart, Versailles. Moulay Ismail claimed a pedigree that reportedly traced back to the Prophet Mohammed and was rumoured to have fathered over 800 children! We'll visit the granaries that stabled the Sultan's 12,000 horses before we head to a local winery where we will enjoy lunch and some wine tasting. From here we will visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Volubilis, considered to be the best-preserved Roman ruins in Morocco and home to a number of stunning mosaics. From Volubilis it is a short ride back to Fes.

**DAY 9 - FES – CHEFHAOUEN (B) (D)**

A leisurely start today, as we make our way from Fes to the picturesque town of Chefchaouen. The town is located beneath the raw peaks of the Rif Mountains (in fact 'Chefchaouen' literally means 'look at the peaks') and it is here that you will notice an unmistakably Spanish influence. This afternoon we will explore the delightful medina with its blue-white walls and terracotta tiles – small and uncrowded it is easy to explore before we head back to the hotel for dinner.

**DAY 10 – CHEFCHAOUEN (B) (L)**

Today is a day to be as active or as relaxed as you want to be! There's the option this morning to go for a fairly easy walk to the falls of Ras el-Maa and the ruined Spanish Mosque where you will find some of the most spectacular views of the town below. Alternately you may wish to take it easy, strolling the narrow streets, shopping for last minute souvenirs or just lounging by the pool and soaking up the sun.

**DAY 11 - CHEFCHOUEN - TANGIER – SEVILLE (B) (D)**

An early departure this morning as we make our way to Tangier in time to catch our ferry to the Spanish port of Tarifa. Once on Spanish soil we will make our way to Seville, the capital of Andalusia and our home for the next two nights. This evening prepare yourself for some of the best tapas in a country renowned for its food, with a walking tour through the cobbled streets to visit places only locals know about!

**DAY 12 – SEVILLE (B)**

Seville, a city that has as much soul as it does beauty, is a feisty assortment of matadors (bull fighters) and cantadors (flamenco singers), monuments, fine art, endless festivals and one of the world's greatest Gothic Cathedrals (St Mary of the See). Stand beneath the Giralda, the beautiful minaret that is all that remains of the original mosque before the Cathedral took its place, listen to the anguished notes as a cantador summons something deep, dark and soulful and relive the history of many generations of caliphs and kings at the Alcazar, Seville's answer to Granada's Alhambra.

**DAY 13 - SEVILLE - RONDA – GRANADA (B) (L)**

This morning we say "Adios" to Seville as we make our way to one of our favourite meals on tour. Today we'll visit a very special winery – it used to be a monastery before being converted into a very small scale, boutique production. We'll enjoy a home cooked lunch so good that you may never want to say goodbye to this spot overlooking the vines! After lunch we'll stop in the beautiful town of Ronda, which is known for its breathtaking views and deep gorge. Take the opportunity to walk over the bridge - but with its 100m drop, don't look down! We will end the day in Granada where you will have a chance to take a relaxed evening stroll before dinner.

**DAY 14 – GRANADA (B)**

Granada is a sun-bleached city of labyrinthine streets and shady Moroccan tearooms, a place that is traditionally conservative but exhibits a liberal dose of bohemian counterculture. Conquered by Muslim forces in 711 and falling to the Catholic Monarchs (Ferdinand and Isabella) in 1492, Granada was at one time one of the richest cities in Europe. Indeed, the Alhambra, or 'red castle' was the very symbol of this wealth and as one of the finest examples of Islamic architecture, is today still the stuff of fairytales. Marvel at the intricate medieval

inscriptions of poetry and verses from the Koran before relaxing in the extensive gardens. This afternoon we have a walking tour of the Albaicin district, the old Moorish quarter across the river Darro from the Alhambra – a fascinating place!

**DAY 15 - GRANADA - ZUHEROS – CORDOBA (B)**

A leisurely start this morning as after we make our way to Cordoba, stopping en route in the picturesque Zuheros. Stark white and scrupulously devoid of any decoration save their wrought iron window grills and potted red geraniums, this is the very definition of a pueblo blanco or 'White Town'. The town is also renowned for its cheese production which uses milk from locally bred goats. Mid-afternoon we will make our way to Cordoba, our home for the next two nights.

**DAY 16 – CORDOBA (B)**

This morning we'll journey a short way outside the city to the Madinat al Zahra, the remains of the sumptuous palace and city constructed by Caliph Abd al-Rahman III. The centerpiece of the city of Cordoba is the gigantic Mezquita, which we will visit this afternoon. Originally built as a mosque in 785, it saw the addition of a gothic church planted right in its centre during the 16th century making this architectural anomaly one of the only places you can take Mass within a mosque! During your free time this evening, why not follow in the footsteps of the medieval Cordobians and indulge in the beautifully renovated Hammam Banos Arabes, the Arab (or Turkish) Bathhouse.

**DAY 17 - CORDOBA – MADRID (B) (D)**

Today we leave Cordoba and make our way on the high-speed train to Madrid. Spain's capital throbs with a palpable energy, a city full to the brim with astonishing art galleries, fine terrazas (cafes or bars with outdoor tables) and baroque architecture. This evening we will savour our last dinner together as a group before perhaps indulging in one of Madrid's specialties – chocolate con churros (deep fried doughnut strips dipped in hot chocolate) – yum!

**DAY 18 – DEPARTURE DAY (B)**

Today we say farewell to new friends as our tour concludes after breakfast.