

Trip Name:	Morocco: Mountain Architecture & Culture	Destination:	Morocco/Fez/ Ait Bougmez Valley/ Zawiya Ahansal
Proposed dates:	April 19-29, 2011	Itinerary Phase:	1

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Custom Travel and Adventure
www.bellatreks.com

Take the road less traveled and experience the real Morocco off of the beaten tourist circuit and into a land of remote Berber villages, nomads, ancient architecture, exotic cuisine and unparalleled hiking. Your guide, Cloe Medina Erickson, has been traveling and working in Morocco for a decade. Cloe speaks Arabic and through her contacts you will experience the countryside as the locals do - by foot and donkey, stay in Berber guesthouses, visit sustainable cooperatives and the Igherm Restoration Project, and hike in the Atlas Mountains. In addition, you will spend a few days in the magical city of Fez where you will stay in a traditional garden house (*riad*) in the old city (*medina*) and explore its ancient markets and architecture. Come with Bella Treks to Morocco and immerse yourself in a tactile adventure, where you will be a part of and feel the beat of the country and its people.

April 19: US/Fez (D)

- Airport pickup.
- Afternoon walk through medieval markets.
- Traditional Moroccan dinner on terrace while listening to call to prayer at sunset.
- Stay in Dar Bensouda, a historic courtyard house, in Fez's *medina* (old city). (double occupancy, private bath)

April 20: Fez (B,L,D)

- Full day guided tour of Fez's *medina* (ancient city). Including a visit to the tanneries, Kairaouine Mosque, Medersa el-Attarine, witchcraft suq and Belgazi Museum.
- Lunch in a traditional Fassi restaurant.
- Afternoon of shopping in the medieval markets. Carpet shopping, souvenirs, visit bath house (*hammam*), etc.
- Dinner at palace restaurant.
- Stay in Dar Bensouda, a historic courtyard house, in Fez's *medina* (old city). (double occupancy, private bath)

April 21: Beni Mellal (B,L,D)

- Depart after breakfast. Travel to Beni Mellal. (5 hours, private 4x4 or minibus)
- Afternoon visit of medina.
- Evening visit to Ain Aserdoun and the kasbah with the Moroccan Ministry of Culture.
- Stay in three star hotel. (double occupancy, private bath)

April 22: Beni Mellal/Ait Bouguemez Valley, Tabant (B,L,D)

- Early departure. Travel to Ait Bouguemez Valley. (4 hours, private 4x4 or minibus)
- Traditional lunch at guesthouse.
- Afternoon walk through village of Aguerd n' Ouzrou.
- Stay in locally owned ecolodge La Casbah du Mgoun. (Double occupancy, private bath)

April 23: Ait Bouguemez Valley, Tabant and surrounding villages (B,L,D)

- Explore the valley's villages by foot. Experience rural Morocco in full bloom - poppies, almond trees, apricot trees, fig trees, alfalfa and mustard paint the landscape.
- Picnic lunch during hike in the surrounding foothills. (Easy, 3 hours)
- Tour valley's *igherm* (fortified granary) and kasbahs.
- Traditional Berber dinner at guesthouse.
- Stay in locally owned ecolodge La Casbah du Mgoun. (Double occupancy, private bath)

April 24: Ait Bougmez Valley, Zawiya Ahansal (B,L,D)

- Morning visit of elementary school and local women's cooperatives.
- Travel to Zawiya Ahansal. (2 hours, private 4x4)
- Possible sighting of Ait Atta nomad caravans traveling from the Sahara.
- Traditional Berber lunch at hotel.
- Tour of Igherm Restoration Project. <http://www.igherm.wordpress.com>
- Hike through fields and following the Ahansal River. (2 hours, easy)
- Traditional Berber dinner at hotel.
- Stay in Dar Ahansal. (double occupancy, private bath)

April 25: Zawiya Ahansal, Amzrai and Aggudim (B,L,D)

- Hike to village of Aggudim, the resting place of the local saint Sidi Said Ahansal. (1 hour, easy)
- Tour region's architectural treasures including the centuries' old house of the saints' families and the privately owned igherm of Ahmad Amahdar, the *sheikh* (tribal leader) of Zawiya Ahansal.
- Lunch at sheikh's house.
- Hike back to Amzrai. (1 hour, easy)
- Afternoon on own. Rest, hike and prepare for tomorrow's trek to Taghia.
- *Goat sacrifice and feast hosted by locals of Zawiya Ahansal!*
- Stay in Dar Ahansal. (double occupancy, private bath)

April 26: Zawiya Ahansal, Taghia (B,L,D)

- Early departure.
- Hike to Village of Taghia. Follow the Ahansal River upstream through limestone gorges, fields and Berber villages. Donkeys will carry all of the overnight gear. (4 hours, moderate)
- Sack lunch on trail.
- Afternoon visit to the source of the Ahansal River - three springs that flow out of the base of Jebel (Mt.) Oujdad.
- Sleep under the stars. Private camping. (double occupancy tents with mattress - bring sleeping bag)

April 27: Zawiya Ahansal, Taghia and Amzrai (B,L,D)

- Optional morning hike around Jebel Oujdad. (moderate/difficult 4 hours) Visit the 'Berber Highway,' a steep mountain trail through the limestone gorges where locals take their goat and sheep herds to high pasture. Or, explore the village of Taghia and visit local women working on carpets.
- Sack lunch.
- Hike back to Amzrai. (4 hours, moderate)
- Siesta.
- Stay in Dar Ahansal. (double occupancy, private bath)

April 28: Marrakesh (B,L,D)

- Early departure. Travel to Marrakesh. (6 hours, private 4x4)
- Lunch and siesta at riad.
- Late afternoon guided tour of Marrakesh's medieval markets and Ben Yusuf Medersa.
- Dinner overlooking the famous *Djemaa el Fna* square; watching the ancient tradition of story tellers, magicians, and acrobats.
- Stay in Dar Zitouna, a historic courtyard house, in Marrakesh's *medina* (old city). (double occupancy, private bath)

April 29: Marrakesh/USA. (B)

- Airport transfer.
- Head home or continue on an extension.

Included:

- ✓ Private transfers from airport and return to airport on day of departure.
 - ✓ 3 star riad in Fez. Traditional courtyard house. Double occupancy with private bath.
 - ✓ Ecolodge in Ait Bougmez. Double occupancy, private bath.
 - ✓ Maison d'hotels in Zawiya Ahansal, Amzrai. Double occupancy, private bath.
 - ✓ Private camping in Zawiya Ahansal, Taghia. Double occupancy tents, cooking tent. Bring sleeping bag.
 - ✓ Meals as indicated on itinerary (B,L,D).
 - ✓ Professional English, Arabic and Berber speaking guides.
 - ✓ Museum entrance fees.
 - ✓ Private 4x4 or minibus transport with a/c..
 - ✓ Guided tour of Fez's medieval markets (full day).
 - ✓ Bottled and/or treated drinking water.
- (*if these hotels are not available we will stay at an equivalent or better establishment)

Not Included:

- Medical insurance.
- Sleeping bag or sleep sack. (needed for night in Taghia, and two nights in Tabant)
- Gratuities to staff.
- Alcoholic drinks, laundry and any other personal expenses.
- Personal snacks (protein bars, jerky etc.).
- Air travel.

Price per person \$3250.00, 50% non-refundable deposit due by Dec. 12, 2010. Final payment due February 15, 2011.

Packing List

- Medications, personal hygiene, contact lenses, cold medicine, bug spray, prescription glasses etc.
- Rain/wind coat
- Warm hat
- Warm coat (lightweight down or fleece jacket)
- Sleeping bag (lightweight to 30F)
- Backpack (daypack size)
- Small Travel Towel
- Hiking boots or sturdy shoes
- Sandals and/or flip-flops
- Sunscreen, sun hat and sunglasses
- Protein bars, jerky or favorite snack
(Suggested: one protein bar for each day plus one pound of jerky per week away)
- Small first aid kit
- Water purification tablets, brand name Potable Aqua
- Antibacterial gels (pocket size)
- Books (not too many, we can all share)
- Two wide-mouthed, 1-liter reusable water bottles (Nalgene or similar)
- Headlamp and batteries
- European plug adapter (2-prong) for camera recharging
- Handkerchief, Buff is a great item to have https://www.buffwear.com/catalog/index.php/cPath/1_5
- Passport copies (2)
- Extra small or medium-sized compressible duffel bag
- One piece of checked luggage per person

- Ear plugs
- Long sleeve or 3/4 sleeve button-up shirts (2-3)
- Lightweight hiking pants (2)
- Lightweight wool shirt for layering (1)
- Hiking socks (3)
- Pajamas (conservative)
- Nice travel skirt or pants for evening out in Marrakesh (1)

PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!!!

Cultural Awareness

Clothing

Out of cultural respect men should not show their shoulders and knees and women should not show their elbows and knees. This means NO shorts. Capris or long pants/skirts only. No tank tops for men and no short sleeve shirts for women (3/4 length or long sleeve only). Nothing tight fitting for women; please do not expose your feminine figure. All clothes should be light weight because it will be warm. Button up shirts are better than t-shirts. Also remember that everything you bring will be used and abused, so don't bring your most favorite and expensive items.

You will see other foreigners wearing less culturally aware clothing both in the cities and the mountains. However, they are 'tourists' rather than guests of the locals. Please be conscious of this while packing.

Health & Safety

Morocco welcomes many visitors with a good case of intestinal problems. This is not because the bacteria is bad, it is just different than what our bodies are used to I travel with acidophilus and grapefruit seed extract, both found at the health food store. These are great ways to combat bacteria on a natural level. If it worsens we have antibiotics to administer.

Zawiya Ahansal is a day's travel from the nearest medical facility. There are NO doctors in the region. This is important to keep in mind while recreating in the area. Be careful at all times; do not take extreme risks to your physical health and safety. Compare the remoteness to being on a backpacking trip in the wilderness; help is hours away. We will have a phone for emergency contact. Please visit the Center for Disease Control for suggested vaccinations and current health advisories. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/morocco.aspx>

Suggested Vaccinations for Morocco

- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Td/Tdap)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Hepatitis A (may require more than one dose - allow time prior to travel)
- Hepatitis B (may require more than one dose - allow time prior to travel)
- Typhoid

You do not need Malaria, Yellow Fever or Cholera.

Food and Water

Don't drink that water! Water purification of some kind is necessary. Bottled water or treated water will be available to you at all times. The houses where you will be staying in the mountains serve breakfast, lunch and dinner. However the food lacks in protein and variety so bringing your favorite protein bar or jerky from home is recommended (remember this adds weight to your luggage).

Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol is forbidden in Islam and Morocco is a Muslim monarchy. In addition, drinking alcohol in front of locals and their families is considered disgraceful. Out of respect for the locals that we will be traveling with our trip is an alcohol free trip (wine may be available at dinner in the cities). In addition, Morocco may be famous for its marijuana and hash but it is still illegal. It is also considered extremely disrespectful to do this in front of locals.

Language

Arabic is the official language of Morocco. French is widespread in metropolitan areas and with men and teenagers in rural regions. Berber is the language of the mountains. English is very rare, with the exception of Marrakesh where it is more and more apparent, but still not everywhere. A little Arabic goes a long way; an Arabic phrasebook is priceless.

Money

Morocco's official currency is the dirham. ATM machines and money exchange houses are plentiful in the cities. However, credit cards are rarely accepted, even at prominent tourist hotels and markets. Do not count on these services outside of the city. If you plan to shop, exchange money or withdraw it before heading into the mountains. VISA is the recommended credit card for an emergency.

Suggested Reading**Islam:**

Armstrong, Karen. Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time.

Armstrong, Karen. Islam.

Moroccan Culture:

Brett, Michael, and Elizabeth Fentress. The Berbers. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Shah, Tahir. The Caliph's House.

Shah, Tahir. In Arabian Nights.

Clammer, Paul et al. Lonely Planet: Morocco 9th edition, February 2009

Canetti, Elias. Voices of Marrakesh

Zawiya Ahansal:

Erickson, Cloe. "New Nomads of the High Atlas." Saudi Aramco World. March/April 2008: 24-29.

<http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200802/new.nomads.of.the.high.atlas.htm>