

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

2nd to 9th March 2024 (1 week)

MOROCCO

natural history, mountains and coast

"fascinating trip...
very interesting part of
Morocco"

"the Atlas Kasbah is one of
the best places we have
stayed anywhere in the world"

Morocco 2018

An introduction to the natural history of southern Morocco.

Morocco is a country of great contrasts. Situated on the edge of Europe, its culture and people are a fascinating **mix of Berber, European, African and Arab** influences. From the Mediterranean coast in the north, through the snow covered Atlas mountains to the arid Saharan desert these diverse habitats make Morocco a top destination for wildlife.

March is the best time for enjoying many of the flowers of southern Morocco, both on the coast and in the mountains. With Mediterranean, Macaronesian and African influences, this area has a **fascinating mix of plants** including succulent *Euphorbias*, colourful composites, toadflaxes and lavenders, along with the endemic Argan tree.

The birdlife is very interesting and we will look for some real local Maghreb specialties, including House Bunting, Moussier's Redstart, African Chaffinch, Black-crowned Tchagra and, with luck, the endangered **Northern Bald Ibis**. We will visit the Souss-Massa National Park where, as well as a variety of birds, we will also look for the large mammals that have been re-introduced here, including Addax, Dorcas Gazelle and the graceful Scimitar-horned Oryx.

Based for the week at the wonderful Atlas Kasbah, near Agadir, this holiday is intended to give an introduction to the plants, birds and other wildlife of this corner of southern Morocco, as well as an insight into the local Berber culture, at a relaxed pace. This trip should be ideal for anyone wanting a taste of Morocco in the company of expert leaders whilst enjoying a high standard of accommodation and easy, comfortable travel.



Price

£1960

Single Room Supplement

£190

Full board

Day 1	flight to Agadir
Day 2	Tighanimine El Baz
Day 3	Cap Rhir, Oued Tamri
Day 4	Taroudant, Tioute
Day 5	Anti Atlas
Day 6	western High Atlas
Day 7	Sous Massa
Day 8	return to UK

Leaders

Laurie Jackson
and Dom Price

Group size

min 4, max 14

wild flowers,
natural history,
culture



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1, Saturday 2nd March. An afternoon flight takes us to Agadir, from where we transfer to our hotel in the hills to the south east of the city (c.40 minutes).

Day 2, Sunday 3rd March. Today we explore the lanes and hillsides around the hotel. The Argan tree, *Argania spinosa* is a remnant of a once tropical flora and a key tree in the local economy: the oval fruits sustain the local community and there is an increasing commercial activity selling the sweet, rich oil. Colourful annual flowers are a feature of the field edges, while the garden birdlife includes Common Bulbul, House Bunting and Moussier's Redstart, species we will become familiar with over the week.

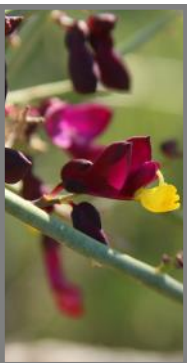
Day 3, Monday 4th March. The Atlantic coast south to the Sahara is well known for its unique communities of succulents *Euphorbia officinarum*, *Euphorbia regis-jubae* and *Kleinia anteuuphorbia* mixed with shrubs such as *Nauplius imbricatus*, *Searsia pentaphylla* and the desert-dwelling *Warionia saharae*. We will visit **Cap Rhir** to explore these communities and visit nearby Oued Tamri, where we hope to find the endangered **Northern Bald Ibis**: the global population is only around 900 birds, with one of the main breeding sites nearby.

Day 4, Tuesday 5th March. Today we visit the attractive town of **Taroudant**, described as a 'mini Marrakech' but with a character of its own reflecting its rich Berber culture. We will enjoy views from ancient city walls and explore the labyrinthine market - full of spices and herbs and traditional furnishings such as rugs and teapots, House Buntings singing from the buildings and Little Swifts flying overhead. We also visit a women's **Argan oil cooperative** and visit the oasis at Tioute, the natural habitat of the date palm *Phoenix dactylifera*.

Day 5, Wednesday 6th March. We head south to the **Anti Atlas**, a low range of ancient mountains, which form much of the landscape in the south east of the country. We will travel to Ait Baha and beyond, with stunning views and interesting plants along the way: local specialities include the toadflax *Linaria ventricosa* and *Hesperolaburnum platycarpum*. Barbary Ground Squirrel and Bibron's Agama may appear along the roadside, while Bonelli's Eagles soar overhead.

Day 6, Thursday 7th March. Today we head in the opposite direction, for the slopes of the **High Atlas**, making a circuit via Paradise Valley and the Cascades du Immouzer. We will find the Berber Thuya *Tetraclinis articulata*, an interesting conifer, as well as hillsides covered in Dwarf Fan Palm mixed in with *Lavandula dentata* and the beautiful shrubby milkwort *Polygala balansae*, with contrasting petals of deep purple and yellow.

Day 7, Friday 8th March. We head south to the famous **Sous Massa National Park**. We will learn about the important conservation work going on here, especially the reintroduction of a variety of **Saharan 'megafauna'** to the reserve: antelopes including



Dorcas Gazelle, Scimitar-horned Oryx and Addax, and the North African Ostrich, all of which have become almost extinct across much of their range due to overhunting. We visit the area where these animals have been reintroduced, enjoying close encounters along the way.



We will finish our day by visiting the Oued Sous, where Greater Flamingos gather on the estuary and feed alongside various waders, gulls and terns.

Day 8, Saturday 9th March. For our final morning, we will re-visit some of the local lanes to see how the spring has progressed. After a final lunch out on the terrace, we will have a lazy afternoon enjoying the relaxing grounds and pool, before we transfer to Agadir and our flights to UK.



Leaders and guide

Laurie Jackson is an all-round naturalist and experienced Wildlife Travel leader who has led more than 30 of our holidays in recent years: this will be her seventh visit to Morocco. Depending on final group size, Laurie will be joined by **Dominic Price**, an experienced botanist and Director of the Species Recovery Trust, who has travelled with us in Morocco twice before.



Between them, our leaders will ensure you get the most out of your time in Morocco. We will be accompanied by Mohammed Belfakir, our local **Moroccan guide**, together with the assistance of Hassan and Helene, the owners of the Atlas Kasbah.

Accommodation, meals and transport

We will stay for the whole week at the wonderful, award-winning **Atlas Kasbah**, set in lush grounds amongst the Argan trees in the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve.

Opened in 2009, the Kasbah was built using traditional techniques and local craftsmen, with a view to promoting ecotourism in Morocco and sharing the local Berber heritage. The rooms are spacious, the local culture reflected in the furnishings, with lovely views from the roof terrace and patio. The hotel is the first accommodation in North Africa to be granted the prestigious **World Responsible Tourism Award** (Gold winner, 2015) as a recognition of its ecotourism practices.



All meals are included, from dinner on day 1 to a picnic dinner on day 8. Evening meals will be at the hotel and we will take picnic lunches on most days.

We will travel by minibus for our excursions. Our visit to Sous Massa will be in high clearance 4WD vehicles.

Flights

Group flights are with Easyjet from London Gatwick to Agadir.

2nd March depart London Gatwick 14.00, arrive Agadir 18.50
9th March depart Agadir 19.40, arrive London Gatwick 22.25

It is also possible to fly from Manchester. Contact us for details and any extra costs.

Entry Requirements: Passports and Visas

Please note that travel rules may be changed at any time. For up to date information, please check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/morocco. Holders of non-UK passports should check with the relevant embassy.

If you hold a British passport, you do not need a visa to travel to Morocco. Your passport should be valid for at least 3 months on your date of entry to Morocco.

Health and fitness

This is not a strenuous holiday but on some days we will be walking for much of the day, sometimes gently uphill. All excursions are optional and you can choose to spend more time in the pleasant grounds and rooms of the hotel if you wish. The hotel rooms are on the first or second floor, reached by stairs.

Travellers should arrange an appointment with their health professional at least four to six weeks before travel to assess health risks. Vaccines against Hepatitis A, Tetanus and Typhoid are recommended for most travellers. Up-to-date information on travel health can be found at travelhealthpro.org.uk

Weather

In March, the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. If we do get hotter weather we will adapt the itinerary as much as possible. There may be some cooler weather and some rain.

TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £650 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 02/12/2023

INCLUDED: Return flight from London (Gatwick) to Agadir as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 7 nights accommodation, all meals from dinner day 1 to lunch day 8. Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Drinks with evening meal and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Covid tests and associated costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH

Tel: 01954 713575 email: wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org
www.wildlife-travel.co.uk



Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Dr Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)

Photos: front (clockwise from top): Atlas Kasbah, Moussier's Redstart, Dorcas Gazelle, *Gynandiris sisyrrinchium*, Barbary Ground Squirrel
Page 2 (from left): *Polygala balansae*, *Cistanche phelypaea*, *Linaria ventricosa*, *Fritillaria lusitanica*, *Euphorbia officinarum*. **Page 3** (from top): *Ismelia carinata*, Black-crowned Tchagra, Scimitar-horned Oryx, Northern Bald Ibis

A trip report from our 2023 Morocco holiday can be found on our website.