MOROCCO - HIKING & DISCOVERY TOUR
March 14-26, 2021
AT# 2109
Trip rating = 3
https://www.outdoors.org/outdoor-activities/difficulty-ratings

INTRODUCTION
This is a fabulous introduction to Morocco’s core highlights for the active and bespoke traveler. We visit Marrakech city; the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert – including the illustrious Erg Chebbi Dunes by camel and the historic cultural capital, Casablanca. Our journey also brings us to the Rif Mountains of the north after visiting the Royal City Meknes and the fascinating ruins of Volubilis. From the perspective of the adventure traveller who still desires comfort, this is an insightful journey that you’ll remember for a lifetime. The focus is on easy-moderate hiking in the Atlas and Sahara regions, with thoughtfully planned days around diverse routes and comfortable lodgings throughout. Rated as a light hiking tour – some days of driving are required (up to 8 hours on one occasion), and the scenery is always changing, with each day offering a new experience in itself. As a private group, we have freedom to tailor make the hiking routes, distances and levels to suit our needs and interests. Welcome to Morocco, a Royal Kingdom steeped in both African and Arabic history and culture – and a welcoming host nation for all nationalities, religions and tastes!

ITINERARY
March 14 - Depart USA

March 15 - Marrakech Arrival
Arrive to Marrakech and private vehicle transfer to hotel (15 minutes), in the Hivernage district of central Marrakech. Hotel Al Andalous 4 star or similar. Welcome dinner in hotel.
March 16 - Marrakech - Medina Tour and City Walk
Discover Marrakech’s fascinating souk (market quarter), and surrounding city highlights on foot with our local specialist guide. A half day walking cultural tour leaving you with time to explore and bargain in this world renown medina. Same hotel. Breakfast and dinner in hotel included.

March 17 - Ait Benhador - Hike in Telouet Valley
Today we cross the Atlas range by vehicle heading for the Sahara. On route we’ll visit Telouet Kasbah in a remote Atlas valley where we can hike the countryside and take lunch in a panoramic café. Our journey ends at Ait Benhador – a famous Kasbah village from the silk trading era and base for many Hollywood blockbusters such as Gladiator, Lawrence of Arabia and Game of Thrones. Hiking time 2.5 in valley region / less than 300 feet elevation gain (region sits at 5000 feet elevation). Hotel Le Rose du Sable with pool. Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 18 – Valley of a Thousand Kasbahs & Tinehir
A scenic drive brings us to the beautiful Skoura date palms and Valley of the Roses where we enjoy hikes through the palms and terraces of henna and safran amongst traditional Berber dwellings made of clay and sand. Our journey ends at Tinehir where we’ll stay in a comfortable hotel near the famous Todra Gorge. Hiking time 2-3 hours / less than 100 feet elevation gain (region sits at 2500 feet elevation). Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 19 – Todra Gorge & Merzouga - Camel trek into dunes / Desert camp
After breakfast we hike the fascinating canyon of Todra where this steep valley descends from the high Atlas to the Sahara below. We then drive 3 hours to Merzouga where the golden Erg Chebbi sand dunes begin. Here we mount camels (or optionally walk) and venture into the dunes to our oasis camp for one night. Catching the sunset from a high dune and the star show that follows are highlights of this experience! Hiking time up to 4 hours / less than 400 feet elevation gain (region is 3500 feet elevation). Dune camp this evening with beds in traditional (closed) camel hair and wool tents with shared toilet and shower services and our camp restaurant. Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 20 - Ouarazate Travel Day / Visit Desert Hollywood Studios
This morning we depart the dunes by camel or foot and travel (6-8 hours) by van through striking desert landscapes to reach Ouarazate city – the service center for the Sahara. Here we explore the Hollywood studios and landscapes made famous in many films and television. On route today we’ll hike the village region of Nkob before our lunch stop. Hiking time up to 2 hours with some cultural walking / less than 100 feet elevation gain (region is 2500 feet elevation). Comfortable hotel with pool tonight. Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 21 - Casablanca – Meknes
Our morning flight takes us from the Sahara to Morocco’s iconic city Casablanca where we have a half day guided tour before driving 3 hours to Meknes, one of Morocco’s Royal Cities located near the Middle Atlas. Today is largely sight seeing although we’ll be on our feet for most of the visits. Walking time 2-3 hours in city regions / less than 100 feet elevation gain (elevation is just above sea level). Hotel tonight in a unique Riad Accommodation typical of travel groups to Meknes. Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 22 - Meknes - Volubilis Roman Site / Drive to Chefchouen
Today we visit wonderful Meknes – including north Africa’s best preserved Roman site, Volubilis. Most of today’s walking will be within the Royal City medina and around the ruins of Volubilis. Our 3 hour drive this afternoon brings us to Chefchouen, Morocco’s blue city and one of the country’s most unique destinations. Walking time 2-3 hours in city & archaeological sites / less than 100 feet elevation gain (elevation is just above sea level). Hotel Darechouen or similar in Chefchouen Medina. Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 23 - Chefchouen – The Blue City & Surrounding Countryside Hike
The Rif Mountains is Morocco’s pretty limestone, forested nature reserve that spans for hundreds of kilometres
from north to south along the Mediterranean coast. Chefchouen is the cultural and administrative heartland of the Rif. Today we explore the wonderful blue city and its medieval souk and maze of lanes and alleyways. A further hike takes us into the remote countryside of the Rif where we’ll witness the Berber families practicing traditional agriculture in the foreground of the dramatic Rif Mountains. Hiking time 4 hours in Chefchouen town and countryside regions / 700 feet elevation gain (elevation 3000 feet). Same hotel as previous night / Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 24 - Chefchouen - Tallesentane National Park & Rifcom Charity Projects
This morning a scenic 45 minute transfers brings us to the heart of the Rif Mountains and the Tallesentane National Park – A world biosphere that connects Morocco to Europe and home to a huge range of plant and animal species such as the Pinsapo Fir, the Barbary Apes and various raptors such as the Griffon Vulture and the Imperial Eagle. Today we hike the rural villages of the national park leading into the canyon of the Tallesentane with spectacular mountain geology and plant life. Hiking time up to 5 hours in National Park / 800 feet elevation gain (elevation is 3000 feet). Same hotel as previous night with Breakfast, Dinner and Trail Lunch included today.

March 25 - Tangier
This morning we transfer 2.5 hours to Tangier, the Paris of North Africa where (time permitting), we’ll explore this unique international medina with a European and Mid-Eastern flavor before taking a direct flight back to Marrakech and a hotel transfer for your final night. Hotel in Marrakech 4 stars with Breakfast and Dinner included.

March 26 - Marrakech Departure
Depending on your flight departure time you will be transferred back to the airport (15-20 minutes) for your onward journey home or back to Europe – leaving you with fond memories of Morocco, it`s wonderfully diverse landscapes and welcoming hosts!

ABOUT YOUR TOUR:

Lodgings – We provide 11 (in country) nights in high quality hotels located in specially selected regions. Rooms are based on double sharing with limited single supplements available. Nearly all hotels have WIFI connections and some have swimming pools. One night of course is in a desert dune camp where all bedding is supplied and bathroom / shower facilities exist but are naturally more basic than in hotels.

Meals – Meals are generally taken within your hotel (and in village cafes for lunch stops). Moroccan food is very healthy and cooked well with plenty of flavor. Traveler’s diarrhea is not common in Morocco when food is prepared in venues used by tour groups. Wine or beer, etc. is not readily available in restaurants and we encourage our participants to ‘stock up’ where available (don’t worry, we’ll source this out for you). Morocco is a tolerant Muslim country and they produce their own wine and beer however drinking licenses are not common for public restaurants. Mineral water is always available and we have 1.5 liter bottles available for sale at supermarket prices on the bus daily. Vegetarian needs can be met however specialist’s diets such as gluten free, vegan, etc. may sometimes be difficult to manage as this is Africa.

Transport – During the tour days, we have a private air conditioned micro bus for our use – normally 2 of them for groups over 16 people. Two internal flights are provided with the nation’s carrier, Royal Air Maroc (A member of Star Alliance).

Personal Money - Outside of the meals not included in your tour price (see itinerary), you may wish to have some Dirhams for other purposes such as purchasing extras like wine / beer / gin, local souvenirs and miscellaneous items.

Exchanging money between your currency and the Moroccan Dirham is easy. Some options are:

- Bring USA Dollars from home for exchange (there are many money changers)
• Use your bankcard here in Moroccan bank machines (good rates of exchange and low fees – pending your bank card arrangements from home)
• Pay with your credit card (VERY limited in Morocco except for higher end purchases and better hotels/restaurants) (Important note – traveller’s cheques are practically obsolete in Morocco)

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET SERVICES IN MOROCCO
Credit Cards may be used for International calls or a Moroccan SIM Card can be purchased for a certain value. INTERNET WIFI is available in most hotels - including cafes throughout the region. Please note, hotel wifi connection always in the common areas but not always guaranteed in rooms and power outages may impact connectivity – you are in Africa after all!

TIPPING
Tipping in the developing world is important for the local people. To save you hassle, tipping for meals and transport services (buses, etc) is included. Tips for local guides and are also included. Tips during meals not included in your itinerary are up to you. The normal rate is 10% and this fee is never included in your final bill – it’s added on by yourself.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MOROCCAN TRAVEL
Morocco has few annoyances or serious health problems. Society is non-violent and the Arab Spring of 2011 was little more than public demonstration in a few large cities. The King of Morocco has had a recent constitutional change accepted by the people via a national referendum – June 2011. Harassment to buy items in the market place is minimal these days – especially with guides present. There have been some random acts of terror – in line but not as severe as European countries like France, Belgium and Germany. We ask that participants practice safety guidelines like avoiding crowded places, demonstrations and strolling at night alone. It is Africa though and poverty is the norm – despite the enormous distribution of wealth that you’ll also witness! Like everywhere, common sense with money, personal handbags, cameras, etc. is advised. For up to date health information about Morocco, consult the website: http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/africa/morocco.aspx and also speak to a medical specialist that deals with travel to this region. Malaria nor any serious tropical diseases are not a problem in this region. There are no cases of Ebola reported to this date in Morocco. We recommend you carry all your prescriptions from home and don’t always expect to find the same items in a local pharmacy. Also include an extra pair of glasses.

HERE’S A FEW MORE TIPS:
• Visas (at time of print) are not required for US, Canadian, Commonwealth, British or European nationals. It is normal to receive a 3 month tourist visa upon entry with a passport containing a minimum of 6 months validity.
• Transport on this tour will be in the form of a private mini bus. Our driving pace is careful so that we can enjoy the views and not feel anxious on the roads.
• Refrain from drinking local water and use bottled water as it is widely sold. They cost about 75 cents to 1 dollar max per 1.5 liter bottle.
• Restaurant prepared food in our experience is tasty, clean and well cooked. Delhi belly is never a problem if precautions are taken such as using anti-bacterial hand cleaner and not touching animals.
• Please respect dress code of locals - shorts / t-shirts (for ladies) are fine in the mountains and in the desert but not usually around mosques or holy centers / town centers and urban market places.
• You can feel safe walking the streets day or night in Morocco – particularly in the areas of this trip. They are accustomed to many foreign visitors and in fact, many live and own property in Morocco. At night however we recommend always walking with another person.
• Our hotels are very clean, modern and designed for international cliental
• Remember to practice good personal hygiene and wash hands throughout the day.
• Be prepared to carry tissue / toilet paper for bathroom stops (hotels have toilet paper)
• Morocco toilets range from traditional ‘hole in the floor’ to sit down models. Our hotels have modern toilets.
• Being ‘stared at’ is common in the developing world. Don’t take offense, it’s very normal.
• Tipping is not common but in restaurants, cafes and for special services (when not included in the itinerary), it’s always welcome.
• Moroccan markets always require a little haggling, it’s normal. Just ask yourself what you’re truly ready to pay first. Normally you can expect to pay one third to half of the clerk’s asking price! It takes some practice and patience however...

Leaders’ right to change itinerary:

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

Leaders’ expectations of participants:

When you participate in this activity, you should be in proper condition for the challenges outlined in this prospectus and equipped with the appropriate gear as stated. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities.

This trip is designed so that everyone may experience our adventure in Morocco through shared participation in activities and tasks in an organized group environment. AMC travelers are known for their cooperative efforts, and expectations are that all participants will be considerate of others sharing this AMC Adventure Travel experience.

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of safety, whether it will be of the group or of the individual. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant’s being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

Tying trip to AMC mission:

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run in a manner supportive of and consistent with the conservation, recreational and educational principles and mission of the Club. Trip leaders encourage participant conduct consistent with Leave No Trace environmental and conservation principles and local regulations.

What trip price of $3290 includes:

• 10 nights twin or double share accommodation in selected hotels as per itinerary
• 1 tented deserted oasis camp night (tent camp with beds / bedding and toilet / shower facilities)
• Meals as indicated on itinerary (all in country dinners / 1 trail lunch / all breakfasts)
• Tour manager services throughout (24/7) provided by Adventurebug Worldwide
• Local Moroccan official day guides where required
• All entrance fees and attractions / visits as per itinerary
• Transfers by air-conditioned private coach as per itinerary
• Return airport transfers at Marrakech included
• Internal flights Ouarzazate to Casablanca & Tangier to Marrakech (2 x 1 way flights with 1 piece checked baggage only – 23 Kg and 1 piece of carry-on luggage up to 10 kg).
• Provision of Camels for desert camp experience
• All local taxes, administrative fees and park entrances
• Tipping for all included meals, coach drivers and local Moroccan guide(s) are included
• Medical Evacuation Insurance
• AMC overhead expense fee

What trip price does not include:

• International flight to/from Morocco
• Beverages at dinner
• Lunches except for 1 trail lunch as stated in itinerary
• Souvenirs and items of a personal nature
• Optional activities during free time
• Trip cancellation insurance
• Housekeeping tips, room service charges and other room charges of a personal nature etc.

Please be aware that, in accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders’ costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, trip cancellation, or loss of baggage. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters. These letters will be sent out by the leaders once we have received our minimum number of qualified applicants.

Cancellation Policy:
The AMC Adventure Travel cancellation policy is based on the fact that your cancellation may not raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. The published minimum penalty schedule is $100 before Oct 1, 2020, and $300 from Oct 1, 2020 onwards. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant. Should the leaders be able to replace you, you may be charged a reduced or zero penalty. This will generally not be determined until after the trip. Please refer to insurance information in the section titled “What Trip Price Includes.”

How air travel is to be handled:
While international participant airfare is not included in the trip price (est $700 to 900), leaders may assist participants in making suitable reservations. Participants will be told when and where they must join the group for the official start of the trip’s planned activities. Once your air tickets are purchased they are your responsibility – do not make any non-refundable travel plans until told to do so by the leaders. The leaders will send out a document with a list of suggested flight from your home airport which will work to get you to Morocco in time for the start of the trip.

The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was submitted to the Adventure Travel Committee for approval (Fall 2019). The final price of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. If the trip’s financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases we incur, will be
shared by trip participants. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase. All Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis and refunds, if any, are issued after the trip’s financial accounting is complete.

**Conditioning and activity/fitness level:**

Participants should be comfortable hiking up to 4 to 5 hours and with elevation gain of up to 800 feet. Participants should have recent previous experience hiking on rolling/hilly/rocky/mountainous terrain.

**Application process or how to apply:**

To apply, you must complete and submit the Participant Application, Confidential Health Questionnaire, and Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release form, enclosing a registration deposit of $1500. You will be considered qualified for the trip when the leaders have determined by conversation with you that you and the trip seem to be a good match. You will be formally accepted, and your check will be deposited. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until we offer them a spot on the trip AND they accept.

**Payment Schedule:**

Final Payment of $1790 due no later than Oct 1, 2020
Please make payments by check payable to the "Appalachian Mountain Club" and mail to: Ginette Beaudoin
66 Graham Street
Biddeford, ME
04005

**Safety:**

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events, procedures and policies have been developed to attempt to limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with volunteer leaders to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips and camps, and transportation in vehicles, on foot, or on a bike. When you apply for acceptance onto a trip, please carefully read and sign the Adventure Travel Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement and call if you have any questions.

**Risks of trip activities:**

Participants should be adequately prepared for cold and hot weather hazards such as wind chill, hypothermia, dehydration, rain, sun exposure and insect bites by ensuring they have sun protection, personal first aid kit, bug repellant and extra layers in their day pack during each day’s activities.

**YOUR VOLUNTEER LEADERS:**

**LEADER:** GINETTE BEAUDOIN
Ginette has been a member of the AMC since 1988 and has led several day and weekend trips in the White Mountains of NH, as well as various parts of Maine. She has led several Austrian Alps adventure trips through the years for both hiking and cross country skiing. She has also lead Adventure travel trips to Yosemite, Bryce and Zion National Parks, Easter Island, Peru, Minnesota, Tuscany, Dolomites, Spain, France, Patagonia, Bolivia, Azores Islands, Australia and New Zealand for the AMC. She has hiked to over 30 high Alpine Huts throughout Austria, Germany, France and Switzerland and has hiked the NH 4000 footers. Her interests include hiking, photography, cross country hiking, snowshoeing, travel, and introducing others to adventure travel.

ADDRESS: 66 Graham Street, Biddeford, Maine 04005
CO-LEADER: ANNA PANSZCZYK

Anna is a Boston Chapter INTRO (AMC) Leader. Anna has co lead AMC Adventure Travel trips to New Zealand, Australia, Dolomites – Italy, Austria, Azores, Yosemite National Park, Minnesota, Peru, Easter Island, Australia, New Zealand, and Morocco. Anna leads hiking trips in the White Mountains and most recently led an excursion to Waterville Valley and Craftsbury Vermont for snowshoeing and cross country hiking. She has also co led the Claybrook ski trip on previous years. During the summer of 2014, she and the trip leader backpacked the Haute Route from Chamonix France to Zermatt Switzerland as well as Kepler Track in New Zealand. This is in addition to trips that she takes to all corners of the world! Anna has completed SOLO Advanced Wilderness First Aid course as well as CPR training.

ADDRESS: 22 Alfred Rd, Arlington, MA 02474
PHONE: 781-648-2492;
EMAIL: annatp12@gmail.com

Gear/Packing list:
You will be required to provide your own daypack, weather proof outerwear, hiking poles, as well as broken in hiking boots. If you wish to save on luggage, you can opt to rent hiking poles once you arrive in Leutasch, but you will still need to bring the rest of your hiking gear with you.

Clothing:
Polypro tops (long and short sleeve) and bottoms
Fleece top
Soft Shell or similar jacket and pants
Rain gear, top and bottom, Gore Tex or similar; not vinyl
Wool or fleece hat
Waterproof mittens/gloves
Sock liners
Hand warmers
Slippers
Casual wear for lodge and sleeping
Wool socks and footwear appropriate for Apres hiking

Gear:
Hiking poles and good hiking boots
Sun Screen, sun glasses
Gaiters, warm hat or headband
Daypack, water bottles, thermos
Camera with extra battery and memory card
Headlamp and extra batteries

Personal:
Prescription and OTC personal medications
Personal first Aid kit
Contact lens supplies
Toiletries such as toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, conditioner, etc
Plastic bags, thick ones and large enough to keep things dry inside your daypack
Alarm clock or just use the one on your smart phone