



Best-Day Adventures & Beyond

This tour is open to all adults.

You are invited on an exotic journey
to discover sites, cities and the Sahara in...

MOROCCO

Casablanca * Sahara Luxury Glamping * Ouarzazate Oasis * Marrakech

Led by Bill Cartiff & Susan Rheins

December 4-16, 2024

plus **Fes, Tangier & Chefchaouen** extension

December 15-20, 2024

(As of 11/30/23)

*Join Ayelet Tours and tour leaders, Bill Cartiff & Susan Rheins for an exotic adventure of a lifetime in Morocco! We'll soak up the sun and sands of the Sahara Desert, explore the ancient Jewish communities, meander through the medinas, savor the spices and flavors of the local cuisine and encounter culture from Casablanca through the desert to Marrakech and beyond! **Open to all adults. The timing and order of the itinerary is subject to change, but all same features will be provided.***



Day 1: Wednesday, December 4, 2024: DEPARTURE

- We depart on our overnight flights to Morocco.
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Day 2: Thursday, December 5, 2024: WELCOME TO MOROCCO!

- We arrive this morning at **Casablanca International Airport**. Those arriving on the group flight (or at the same time as the group flight's arrival) will be met by an Ayelet Tours representative and transferred to our hotel. Those arriving independently will be provided with transfer options (additional cost) in due time.
- **Casablanca – The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship**: Get your first glimpse of Casablanca on a tour of Morocco's economic hub and largest city. We'll experience its energy and discuss whether the modern and modernizing Casablanca you'll explore has anything in common with the version seen in the classic Hollywood film starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.
- This afternoon, we enjoy a **panoramic tour of the city** as we take in the vibrant energy all around us.
- We stop for an included **lunch** for our first taste of delicious Moroccan cuisine in a lovely setting.
- We check into our hotel. After a chance to relax and freshen up, we come together for a **welcome program, orientation** and snack in a private room.
- We continue to our **welcome dinner** at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Casablanca (L, D)

Day 3: Friday, December 6, 2024: GETTING TO KNOW CASABLANCA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We are greeted by **Rabbi Jacky Sebbag**, Director of **Ozar HaTorah Neve Shalom Jewish School**. Rabbi Sebbag is a key figure in the Moroccan Jewish community and he'll help us foster a better understanding of Jewish life past and present in Morocco.
- **God's Throne Upon the Water**: Fast-moving Casablanca is also a city of faith, as we'll experience at the **Mosque of Hassan II**. This modern mosque has room for over 100,000 worshippers. It is perched dramatically over the ocean to reflect a verse in the Koran that "God's throne was built upon the water." Over 6,000 master craftspeople created its hand-carved marble walls, retractable roof and the tallest minaret in the world at almost 700 feet. See if you agree with the builder's patron, King Hassan II, that this is a monument that Casablanca will be proud of "until the end of time."
- followed by **lunch** at **Rick's Café**, created to evoke the architecture and atmosphere of the classic Humphry Bogart film.



- **Mellah of Casablanca:** The mellah was a former Jewish quarter similar to a European ghetto. It tantalizes the senses with a sea of women in brightly colored djellabas carrying and selling fruit and vegetables throughout the cramped, narrow streets. While Jews no longer live in the mellah, kosher butchers are found in the old market.
- **Boulevard Mohamed El Hansali:** We stroll down the boulevard with its exotic bazaars, stopping in **Mohammed V square** along the way. This square, commonly known as “Pigeon’s Square” due to the heavy presence of the bird was established in 1916 in honor of the former king of Morocco.
- We continue to the **Habous**, also developed in 1916 in the early stages of the French protectorate. This neighborhood is a cultural and religious center in the city and is home to the Moroccan Ministry of Islamic Affairs. We wander through the alleyways to view the traditional and historic buildings that bring many visitors each year.
- We return to our hotel to freshen up for our evening out.
- As the sun begins to set, we come together for a **Shabbat service** at **Bet El Synagogue**, where we view the beautiful stained-glass windows and architecture. While many of us are familiar with Ashkenazi Jewish culture, Morocco was for centuries one of the great centers of Sephardi Judaism. Before arriving for services, we’ll hear from our guide about Morocco’s once large and thriving Jewish communities, discuss why Jews left Morocco en masse beginning in the 1950s and find out about the Moroccan Jews of today.
- This evening, we come together to enjoy **Shabbat home hospitality dinner** with a local Jewish family.

Overnight in Casablanca (B, L, D)

Day 4: Saturday, December 7, 2024: A TASTE OF CASABLANCA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Shabbat Shalom! This morning provides us with a chance to capture the Shabbat spirit with a more leisurely morning. Choose to:
 - Sleep in and relax and the hotel
 - OR**
 - **Strollin’ the Streets:** Set out on a walk with our guide to continue your discovery of Casablanca on foot. Get an up-close look at hidden gems and discover the charm of a seaside city that has become a bustling metropolis. Stop by the wharf to see the fishermen, known as the heart and soul of the city, bringing in their daily catch, then continue to the **Bab Marrakech flea market** to see the variety of wares and grab a snack.
- **A Tasting Tour of Casablanca:** Mid-day, we come together and set out to savor the flavors of Morocco on an authentic, in-depth **food and culture walk**. We make our way through local markets, taste street food and envelop ourselves in the culture and traditions of Morocco.
- **Going to Market:** This afternoon, our bus will drop us off at the **Habous Souk** also known as **New Town Market** on Boulevard Victor Hugo. Browse the stalls of handmade goods, foods, spices and everything in between.



- This evening, we check out of our hotel (late afternoon check out is included in our stay here) and go to **dinner** before heading to the airport for our late-night flight to **Errachidia**.
- Upon landing, we transfer to our hotel to check in.

Overnight in Errachidia (B, L, D)

Day 5: Sunday, December 8, 2024: ERFOUD & ERG CHEBBI

- Breakfast and leisurely morning at our hotel before check out.
- Early this afternoon, we set out on our 2-hour drive to **Erfoud**, known as the “**Gate of the Sahara**”. This oasis town with its red sand buildings in the Sahara Desert was developed by the French around the 1920s and has been the location of a variety of film shoots. The majority of the area is home to Arab residents, however Berbers began to populate the city in the 1990s.
- Upon our arrival, we enjoy a taste of local cuisine with **lunch** at one of the oriental bazaars.
- Following lunch, we drive to **Luxury Camp Chebbi** for a “glamping” experience in the desert, offering a combination of a nomadic lifestyle and the accoutrement of a luxury hotel. Here, we will enjoy tranquility, traditional **Berber hospitality** and a **camel ride** through the desert scenery to watch the sunset.
- As day turns to night, we enjoy a delicious **Berber style dinner** in the large restaurant tent, followed by **Berber music**, a campfire and an unforgettable evening under the stars.



Overnight in Erg Chebbi (B, L, D)

Day 6: Monday, December 9, 2024: ERG CHEBBI

- Breakfast at our luxury camp.
- **Desert Adventures:** We spend the day filled with more desert adventures. We begin with a **4x4 ride** through the sand dunes with an experienced guide, stopping to visit the village of **Gnawa nomadic families**, the **mine deposit** and the **palm gardens** to see the ancient irrigation system.
- We stop for a **picnic lunch** in the desert.
- **An Ocean Made of Sand:** For those who are daring, try **sandboarding** (sand surfing) just like snowboarding, but on sand or choose a “**sand bath**” and be covered from chest to toes in sand by a curist. This treatment has been used since antiquity to relieve rheumatism (additional cost on own)
- We enjoy the evening at our camp singing, dancing, enjoying **dinner** and drinking mint tea together.

Overnight in Erg Chebbi (B, L, D)



Day 7: Tuesday, December 10, 2024: TODRA GORGES TO OUARZAZATE

- Those who wish may rise early to watch the **sunrise over the desert**.
- Breakfast at our luxury camp.
- **Gorgeous Gorges:** We depart our camp and begin our full day's journey traveling west until we arrive in **Ouarzazate** later today. Along the way, we stop at the **Todra Gorges** nestled in an idyllic desert landscape with the **River Todra** carving its way through. Mountaineers, climbers and travelers flock to the area in search of extraordinary beauty. Here, we enjoy a short scenic hike before making our way to the **Todra Palmeraie**, home to a working date plantation as well as vegetable gardens and orchards of pomegranate trees. We learn how dates are grown and harvested and gain insight into the lives of the farmers. Our guide will provide us with a taste of the date syrup used on bread as an alternative to jam or honey.
- **A Date with Sweet Dates:** We also visit one of the small villages in the area, where our guide will help translate the Tamazight language to help communicate with the local Berbers. Famous for their hospitality, we will enjoy a **light lunch**, taste the sweet dates and drink tea while learning about their simple and peaceful lifestyle.
- We continue to **Ouarzazate**, a notable film-making location and home to Morocco's biggest film studios. Movies such as "Lawrence of Arabia", "The Mummy" and "Gladiator", as well as part of the series "Game of Thrones" were filmed here.
- Upon arrival, we check into our hotel and have a chance to refresh, followed by **dinner** here tonight.



Overnight in Ouarzazate (B, L, D)



Day 8: Wednesday, December 11, 2024: THE ROAD TO MARRAKECH

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- **Hollywood at the Oasis:** Today, we tour the **Cinema Museum of Ouarzazate**, where we learn behind-the-scenes secrets about the filmmaking industry. As Charlie Chaplin once said, “It is not what’s real that counts in a movie, but what the imagination can create out of it.” Rich in cinema history, movie lovers will delight in visiting the actual set from “Gladiator” as well as sets from other movies filmed in the area, plus costumes and props dating from the silent era to the present day.
- **It Takes a (fortified) Village:** We depart Ouarzazate and travel a short distance to the famous ksar (fortified village) of **Aït Benhaddou**, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Surrounded by high defensive walls with houses small and large crowded together, this ksar is a prime example of the architecture seen in southern Morocco. A ksar could be compared to a gated or master planned community in America with community areas in addition to dwellings. The site was once a major trading post on the commercial route linking ancient Sudan to Marrakech. While here, we enjoy **lunch** in a local restaurant.
- We continue our drive for approximately 120 miles to **Marrakech**, city of palm trees and gardens at the edge of the Sahara Desert, and within view of the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. Jews have lived in Marrakech since the first century. Marrakech sees many Jewish visitors these days, including many flocking from Israel to experience its unique culture, exotic energy and Jewish history.
- After checking into our hotel and a chance to freshen up, we set out for **dinner** at a lovely restaurant nearby.



Overnight in Marrakech (B, L, D)



Day 9: Thursday, December 12, 2024: JEWISH MARRAKECH & ROYAL SPLENDORS

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- **Coexistence, Conflict or Both – Jews and Muslims:** We tour the **mellah** (the Jewish quarter) of Marrakech. Until the 20th century, most urban Moroccan Jews, including in Marrakech, lived in walled, Jewish-only areas. We'll explore whether these quarters resembled the ghettos of Europe or were something quite different as we discuss the sometimes close, sometimes brutal relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco. While in the mellah, we visit **Slat Al Azama Synagogue ("Synagogue of the Exiles")** established around 1492 by Jews who were expelled or fled from Catholic persecution in Spain and Portugal. The synagogue's ornamentation, attractive blue-and-white decor and small but still active community are all examples of how the Jewish traditions of Marrakech are being maintained.
- Along the way, we stop for **lunch** together.
- **Royal Splendors:** Next, we'll tour the **medina** (walled city) of Marrakech, one of Morocco's four imperial cities, also known as the Red City for the red walls that surround it. The medina is a thrilling, multifaceted area which includes:
 - **Bab Agnaou:** A huge, superbly decorated gate allowing entrance into the royal city.
 - **Bahia Palace:** Built in the late 19th century by Morocco's leading artisans, many consider this to be the finest palace built anywhere in the world during this time. Certainly, its architecture, gardens and design render it a remarkable achievement of Moroccan culture. Among its features is a harem, where vizier Abu Ahmed's four wives and 24 concubines lived.
 - **The Saadian Tombs:** The tombs provide lavish insights into the wealth and power structure of the Saadian dynasty that ruled Morocco from 1549 to 1659. The greatest of their kings, Ahmed al-Mansour, is buried in the magnificent Chamber of 12 Pillars in a tomb made from Italian marble and gilded with pure gold. Less exalted princes and rulers from the dynasty are buried nearby. The royal wives, chancellors and the king's Jewish advisers were "relegated" to graves in the still impressive gardens.
- After a full day of touring, we return to our hotel for a chance to relax before time for dinner on our own. We re-gather for an evening of Moroccan mystique at a **Fantasia show**.



Overnight in Marrakech (B, L)



Day 10: Friday, December 13, 2024: MOROCCO PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

- Breakfast and leisurely morning at our hotel.
- ***Preserving the Past, Building a Future***: Named after the traditional Jewish Moroccan celebrations held at the end of Passover, **Association Mimouna** is an organization of Muslim students who honor the country's Jewish traditions and promote Jewish-Muslim friendship. We'll meet some of the students and hear of their activities, which range from kosher cooking workshops to organizing one of the Islamic world's first conferences commemorating victims of the Holocaust.
- ***The View (and Taste) From the Inside - Bringing it Home with You***: We take part in a **Moroccan home-cooking workshop** and enjoy **lunch** of our own making.
- ***A Square That's Hip***: The **Djema El Fna Square** is an enormous market and a thrilling experience. According to one theory, its name means "the assembly of the dead" and refers to the public executions that used to take place here. Today, this square teems with life. Locals gather to shop, talk and to eat some of the best street food in all of Morocco. There's always something going on, so get ready for a daily carnival of snake charmers, street vendors, musicians, storytellers and acrobats.
- This evening, we join together for **Kabbalat Shabbat** led by Bill and Susan at our hotel, followed by **Shabbat dinner** together.



Overnight in Marrakech (B, L, D)



Day 11: Saturday, December 14, 2024: SHABBAT SHALOM!

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- **Shabbat Shalom!** This morning, choose to attend services on own at **Slat el Azama** or just relax and take in our exotic surroundings!
- **The French Connection:** Morocco is a melting pot of identities and influences ranging from its indigenous Berber tribes to more recent visitors including the French, who ruled over much of the country from 1912 to 1955. Later this morning, we'll spend time in the **French Quarter** and visit **Majorelle Garden**, designed by the French painter and botanist Jacques Majorelle. The garden and buildings took him 40 years to create, but you will think it was time well spent as we wander along paths by sparkling pools shaded by gorgeous trees and plants from around the world.
- The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure for last-minute shopping or take a walk to the famed **La Mamounia** hotel to explore the grounds and enjoy lunch on own.
- This evening, we come together one last time for a festive **farewell dinner** and reminisce about our Moroccan adventures.

Overnight in Marrakech (B, D)

Day 12: Sunday, December 15, 2024: UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the Marrakech Airport for our flights home.

OR EXTEND YOUR MOROCCAN ADVENTURE IN FES, TANGIER & CHEFCHAOUEN

Day 12: Sunday, December 15, 2024: OUR ADVENTURE CONTINUES

- Free morning to relax at our hotel or venture out for exploration on own through Marrakech!
- We check out of our hotel mid-day and transfer to the airport to board our afternoon flight to **Fes**. A **boxed lunch** is included today.
- Upon arrival, we transfer to our hotel to check in, relax and enjoy the hammam or spa on own.
- We join together for **dinner** this evening at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Fes (B, L, D)



Day 13: Monday, December 16, 2024: FINDING FES

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- **A Thousand Years and More – Jewish Life in Fes:** Despite suffering from periodic persecutions, Fes's **fe (Jewish Quarter)** was home to brilliant scholars, poets and innovators. We'll travel back in time to the Golden Age for Jews in Fes from the 8th to 12th centuries, when the community included some key figures in the Jewish world, including Rabbi Moses Maimonides (the Rambam), the great philosopher and religious thinker. We'll also find out why the name for a Jewish quarter comes from the Arab word for salt. Our tour will include:
 - **Ibn Danan Synagogue:** Although recently restored, this is one of the oldest and most important synagogues in North Africa.
 - **The Fes Jewish cemetery:** We will hear stories of some of the city's legendary rabbis and leaders who are buried here and learn about the influence of the tzaddikim, Jewish holy men who were admired by both Jews and Muslims for their scholarliness and reputation as miracle-workers. We'll also stop at a plaque commemorating Sol Hachuel, a young Jewish woman famed for her beauty who was decapitated in 1834 for refusing to convert to Islam.
- **Finding Fes:** The **Fes Medina** is a dense maze of alleyways and streets and the largest car-free pedestrian zone in the world. Don't worry, our tour educator knows the way through this UNESCO World Heritage site that still includes many buildings, mosques and gates from the 12th century. Based on timing, our visit may include:
 - **Local craftsmen:** Catch a glimpse of the craftsmen at work in their shops as they weave, embroider, carve and chisel using ancient techniques.
 - **Madrasa Bou Inania:** Fes contains some of the finest Islamic architecture in the world. This madrasa (Islamic religious college) was established in 1351 and is famed for its minaret and geometric decorations. It is one of the few Islamic sites in Morocco that is accessible to non-Muslim visitors.
- We stop for **lunch** along the way.
- **Older Than Oxford:** The **University of Al-Karaouine** is believed to be the oldest continuously operating university in the world. Today, non-Muslims can view it only from the outside but in the 12th century, the Rambam (Moses Ben Maimonides) studied medicine and philosophy here.
- **The Scent of Fes:** Fes is known for its leather goods and its great stretch of tanneries that give the city its distinctive smell. We'll visit the **Chouara Tannery**, where traditional ways of making leather are still practiced.
- We return to our hotel for an evening at leisure and dinner on own.



Overnight in Fes (B, L)



Day 14: Tuesday, December 17, 2024: CHEFCHAOUEN

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we depart Fes and drive approximately 4 hours to **Chefchaouen** to experience the old town's famous Jewish-inspired, blue-washed buildings. Originally built as a fortress in the 15th century, the town is picturesquely nestled in the Rif Mountains. We see the **octagonal mosque** and **Spanish ruins**, then explore the **medina** and the winding alleys of this charming village, reminiscent of an Andalusian village in Spain.
- Next, we visit the **Plaza Uta El Hammam**, the **Ras el Maa** and the wash houses, where locals handwash their laundry.
- We continue to the **Kasbah**, originally built as a base to ward of military attacks to take over the north coast of Morocco. Chefchaouen was an ideal place in the mountains to resupply and launch counterattacks. The emir and his subjects had living quarters as well as barracks for the soldiers and prison cells, plus a mosque. Today, the kasbah is home to a museum, art gallery and more.
- Later this afternoon, we check into our hotel, followed by **dinner** together at our hotel.



Overnight in Chefchaouen (B, D)

Day 15: Wednesday, December 18, 2024: TO TANGIER

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Today, we travel about 2.5 hours to the city of **Tangier**. Many cultures have influenced the history of Tangier from Berber to Phoenician, and it was once a destination for many European and American diplomats, spies, bohemians, writers and businessmen. We drive the coastal road of the city, which is located at the western entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean off **Cape Spartel**.
- After taking in the beautiful views, we stop for **lunch** at a local restaurant.
- This afternoon, we check into our hotel and have time to relax.
- Tonight, we enjoy **dinner** either in a Jewish Club or at the home of a local Jewish woman to hear her story of Jewish life in Tangier.

Overnight in Tangier (B, L, D)



Day 16: Thursday, December 19, 2024: TANGIER IN-DEPTH

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we enter the old **medina** at Rue Es-Siaghinie, the busiest part of this Roman medina, lined with cafes and bazaars, a Spanish church, jewelers' shops and an arts center displaying works depicting Tangier's social history. We walk **Petit Socco**, which was once the heart of the medina, where businessmen and bankers frequented cafes, hotels, casinos and cabarets that have since relocated to Ville Nouvelle.
- We move on to visit the **Grand Mosque**, built on the site of a Portuguese cathedral, then stop to enjoy lunch on own nearby.
- **Tangier Jewish Heritage Tour & Community:** The first Jews migrated to **Tangier** (once known as Tanja or Tingis) after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem and settled among the Berbers. A second wave of migration from the Jews living in the Iberian Peninsula began with the 1492 Alhambra Decree and expulsion. Behind a non-descript door, located on Rue Synagogue is the **Moshe Nahon Synagogue**. This last remaining operating synagogue in Tangier is monumental and lavish, ranking among one of the most beautiful synagogues in Morocco. At one time, there were over 20 synagogues in Tangier. On Rue des Synagogues, there are many former synagogues. One of them, **Temple Benatar**, has been restored and is superbly decorated.
- Historically unlike Morocco's other Imperial cities, Tangier did not have a formal Jewish mellah. Instead, it had an unprotected **Jewish quarter** and we'll stop by for a short visit.
- We "rock the Kasbah" with a **home hospitality experience** enjoying some tea and Arab-Andalucian melodies at **Les Fils du Détroit**.
- Next, we'll enjoy the vantage point of the **Colline de Bella-Vista**, then drive to see the **Grand Socco**, a popular nighttime square close to the **Mosque of Sidi Bou Abib** and the link between **Ville Nouvelle** and the medina.
- This evening, we enjoy a festive **farewell dinner** together at a delicious restaurant.



Overnight in Tangier (B, D)



Day 17: Friday, December 20, 2024: FAREWELL MOROCCO

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the **Tangier Airport** or choose to take the high-speed train back to Casablanca (approximate 2-hour ride; additional cost) for our flights back to the United States, landing later today.

The Memories Last Forever!!

**Itinerary subject to change*



About Tour Leader Bill Cartiff:

For over 25 years, Bill has dedicated himself to leading travel, following his passion and living by the adage that “Not all who wander, are lost”. He has led thousands of single Jewish travelers to over 60 countries around the globe and has partnered exclusively with Ayelet Tours since 2013. As “BDA” continues to grow, Bill never underestimates the meaning and power of helping people explore the world. He is committed to providing a carefree travel experience with personalized attention, action-packed itineraries, a warm and welcoming environment and meaningful memories meant to last a lifetime.



About Tour Leader Susan Miller Rheins:

Susan is a Reform rabbi with 35 years of practical experience as a synagogue rabbi, Jewish educator and college chaplain. She has been to Israel nearly 40 times and has immense experience leading Jewish heritage tours in many places around the globe including Israel, Central and Eastern Europe, and Cuba. As a tour leader, Susan champions the Jewish principle “to learn and to teach,” fully appreciating the Jewish communities we’ll visit and the people we’ll meet. She is excited to explore Morocco with you and dedicated to creating a relaxed, meaningful, and memorable travel experience.

