

LUKE'S FOOD TOUR OF MOROCCO - MAY 2-16, 2024



A note from Luke.

My Moroccan adventure is young and fresh but I am super excited to be taking you to Morocco, a land full of colour, intrigue and great food. Once again I am teaming up with Bill from Outback Beds Tours to craft this food adventure.

Bill's Moroccan adventure started some decades ago. His two older sisters Pauline and Mary were escaping cold London in the hip 70's and looking for a warm and exotic week of adventure. As adventures do, one thing led to another and Pauline married Morad the tour guide (quite the scandal) and went on to live many years in Tangiers in Northern Morocco. Some years later Bill visited the family in Morocco. Bill found himself in charge of three young multi-lingual children, the keys to a Renault 4 and a house helper who didn't speak English while Pauline just "popped over to Paris" to get new passports for the children while her husband, Morad left on a month long tour.

The adventure began. Pauline was gone "quite some time". Bill mastered the Renault 4, loaded up the kids and started exploring on day trips from Tangiers. Within these months, and many subsequent visits to Morocco, Bill has travelled extensively in Morocco and has immersed himself in it's food and culture. One of Bill's great passions in life has been cooking Moroccan food. He has passed this enthusiasm and his great cooking skills (he made me say that) on to me.

Morocco is a big country but in our two weeks we will comfortably cover a lot of ground and enjoy the best of what it has to offer. We will explore the imperial cities, the mountains and the deserts. Whilst we travel around we will focus on all things delicious but have a particular interest in the food and the culture of food. Morocco. Just saying it conjures up the aroma of delicious tagines, images of bustling souks, the labyrinths of the medinas (ancient walled cities) and the vibrant colours of the spice stalls. We will visit food markets, have guest cooks prepare meals, eat at good restaurants and do a little cooking ourselves.

Morocco is a relatively liberal Muslim country (though it still pays to dress modestly) and is still strong in culture and traditions ready for you to discover for yourselves. Our interpreter and professional guide is Bill's brother-in-law, Morad. He will be leading us on our carefully crafted tour where we will boldly go in search of the traditions, culture, architecture, nature and, most of all, the fabulous food of Morocco.

This is a small group tour and includes travel, accommodation, food and entry to a great number of sites and activities. Morad, Bill and I are very much looking forward to a fun adventure together. We will see you all in Casablanca in May.

bsslaama

Luke



MOROCCAN ITINERARY – May 2–17, 2024

Day 1 Thursday, 2 May 2024

Arrival Casablanca

Arrive at Mohamed V Casablanca International Airport. Bill, Morad or Luke will meet you at the airport and take you to your airport hotel. As we anticipate that you will be arriving on different flights throughout the day and evening, there will be no formal dinner arranged. However, we will informally arrange a time to meet for a drink or snack for those who will be arriving before dinner. If you are tired, or want to test the seals on your duty free, or even contemplate why you can't afford to travel first class, you can retreat directly to your room for the evening and we will see you for breakfast at 8.00 am.

Overnight: Onomo Airport Hotel (TBC)

Included: Light supper (Optional)

Day 2 Friday, 3 May

Casablanca to Marrakech

Breakfast at 8.00am at the hotel. This morning we visit the Grand Mosque. This is the only mosque in Morocco which allows non Muslims to visit. Built by the present King's father, Hassan II, it is strategically built on the sea. Although a



head scarf is not required, dress modestly. Next to the mosque there is a park with a nice view over the Atlantic, we will picnic there before we take the drive to Marrakech (it's about 250km but as Morocco is modernising rapidly it seems that there are road works everywhere, so our trip will be at a steady pace). Spoiler alert, the film Casablanca with Humphrey and Ingrid wasn't filmed in Casablanca – however there are a number of “original” Rick's Bar scattered throughout the city.

Arrive in Marrakech in the mid afternoon where we will check into our riad (a riad is a traditional form of accommodation in Morocco. The word refers to the courtyard garden around which the accommodation was built and they are typically quite beautiful and have a rooftop terrace, sometimes offering a great view. Often they are the converted homes of wealthier people).

Marrakech is one of the largest oasis in Morocco and is a fascinating city and there are a number of land marks that we will visit such as the Saadian Tombs in the Kasbah (the central fortified part of the city – perhaps similar to an old English citadel in concept) and the Bahia Palace located in the Jewish quarter known as the

Mellah. We will spread these visits out over the next couple of days but we might get to one or two of them this afternoon depending on our arrival time.

A feature of Marrakech is Djemaa El Fna Square. Djemaa El Fina is perhaps the greatest show on earth, bursting with performers such as jugglers, storytellers, snake charmers, acrobats all performing at sunset and into the evening as they have done for centuries.

The show is backed up admirably by an army of food vendors who make you weak at the knees with a barrage of colours, aromas, enticing treats, intriguing foods and exotic displays, and of course the ubiquitous fake designer sunglasses. Quite the place to enjoy watching the world at play. We will be walking through the square a number of times during our stay en route to our accommodation. In the evening we return to our riad to relax and have dinner.



This evening there will be welcome drinks on the roof of our riad and dinner. Over a couple of glasses of local wine, Bill, Morad and Luke will go through the itinerary and explain what will be happening over the next 2 weeks and what to expect in Morocco.

Accommodation: Riad Touda or similar
Included: B/L/D

Day 3 Saturday, 4 May, 2024

Marrakech

This morning we have a magical tour of the medina and souks, mostly on foot. Discover the authentic shops and stalls the locals shop at, and see the store holders making some traditional Moroccan foods – such as the preparation of the Tanja at the butcher and onto the hammam (similar to a Turkish Bath) where it will cook for the rest of the day. The souk is huge and is loosely divided into sections depending on



the trade; food, spice, leather work (including the traditional slippers called baboosh), tailors, clothing, electrical, arts and crafts, souvenirs, brass and copper works and so on. As we walk our guide will point out and explain many interesting features of the souk including the farnashi for the tangia, the fruit and vegetable market, olive market, traditional sweets and nougat. We will purchase and taste some of the foods as we walk through the souks and have lunch in a cafe in the souk or encompassing medina (the old part of town – usually within the city walls).



Dinner will be at a local restaurant.
Accommodation: Riad Touda
Included: B/L/D

Day 4 Sunday 5 May, 2024

This morning we have a food morning. By now we would have sampled a number of delicious Moroccan salads. Luke and our Moroccan chef will show you how to make them plus one or two other local specialties. What we produce will be our lunch. Not interested in cooking? then it is free time to explore Marrakech.

Marrakech



In the afternoon we visit the Jardin Majorelle, with its abundance of giant bamboo, yucca, papyrus, palm, cypress and banana trees, philodendrons and bougainvilleas and amazing cacti with natural colours that contrast vividly with the bright blue façade of the villa, which was lovingly restored by the late Yves St Laurent and where he spent much of his leisure time. There is also an optional YSL museum to visit (own cost). The museum is close to the gardens and house a permanent exhibition devoted to the work and heritage of the couturier. Just outside the museum you will see some interesting designer boutiques and there is a good café which is a good meet up point. If we have any additional time we will return to the souks where Morad can help you bargain for any must haves.

Dinner will be at a local restaurant.
Accommodation: Riad Touda
Included: B/L/D

Day 5 Monday 6 May, 2024

Marrakech to Skoura

Today we travel on to Skoura with its large Unesco-protected palm groves (about 250km). Our accommodation is at Les Jardins de Skoura, a traditionally built adobe house, located in the heart of the palm groves of Skoura, in the greenest part; it has a large garden with hundreds of palm and fruit trees (and pool). It is a lovely place to relax.

To break the journey we will visit Ait Ben Haddou kasbar. Ait Ben Haddou dates from the 11 Century and is UNESCO Heritage protected. When you look out over the valley, it appears that Ait Ben Haddou has been frozen in time (except that you might spot Denzil Washington off to the side while they are filming Gladiator II). The kasbar has also been used to film Lawrence of Arabia, Jesus of Nazareth, Game of Thrones and a host of other period movies. You will understand why when we visit.



Accommodation: Les Jardins de Skoura
Included: B/L/D

Day 6 Tuesday, 7 May, 2024

Skoura to Todra Gorge and the Sahara

Leave after breakfast for our drive to Tinghir and Todra Gorge passing through the Valley of thousand Kasbahs and El Kalaat M'Gouna known for its "Rose Festival" held each year in May. It is a region known by its perfumes and cosmetics made from rose water, and by the hospitality and warmth of its people.

It is another long-ish day of driving from Skoura to the Sahara (330km) but we will stop at a couple of



places to break our journey including the dramatic Todra Gorge. The Todra Gorge is a 300m deep fault line that splits the orange-red limestone into a deep ravine through which runs a crystal clear river originating from a spring. We will break here a take a walk through the Gorge

and have lunch at a local cafe. Another break will be at a berber carpet making cooperative.

Berber Carpets are often quite geometric, colourful and a lot of fun.

We end the day at our Sahara Camp. The camp is a mix of traditional Berber design, coupled with modern comfort. It is surrounded by sand dunes and is located adjacent to the highest dunes in Morocco. Our tents are all en suited and temperature controlled. The tents are spacious and comfortable. Breakfast is served under the morning sun and dinner is served under the stars. Relaxing areas with day beds and cushions are setup outside.

Accommodation: Sahara camp

Included: B/L/D

Day 7 Wednesday, 8 May 2024 Into the Sahara

Today we spend the day exploring the Sahara and relaxing in our Bedouin-style camp. Plan on 4WD into the desert, visiting a nomadic camp, sunset camel rides, fireside music jams, star-filled nights and endless cups of mint tea. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of a morning walk and enjoy the cool air before the promise of a hot day.

Accommodation: Sahara Camp

Included: B/L/D



Day 8 Thursday, 9 May 2024

Sahara – Atlas Mountains – Fes

This morning we drive over the Middle Atlas Mountains to the Imperial City of Fes. It is another longish drive (470km) but we will be stopping a few time to stretch our legs or grab a coffee.

During the first part of the journey we are driving through towns that survive on rivers sourced from the snow melt of the Atlas Mountains. It is green and productive on the strip of land that runs alongside the river but beyond that the



countryside is marginal. It is quite a dramatic contrast. Our first large town is Erfoud which lies in the heart of Morocco's fossil beds. Excavation of fossils has become quite an export industry. We will stop for lunch in one of the small towns that we pass through and you can purchase your lunch directly (own cost) from one of the small stall holders. However, we will also buy snacks for the bus which you might like instead (or as well as).

From about lunch time the scenery we pass through becomes quite dramatic as we drive into the Atlas Mountains. We drive along the sides of mountains, into panoramic valleys, through oak and cedar forests and Berber hill towns and villages as well as some of Morocco's nicest national parks. We even pass through a ski resort – who would have thought?, a ski resort in Morocco and on a day that we started in the Sahara Desert.

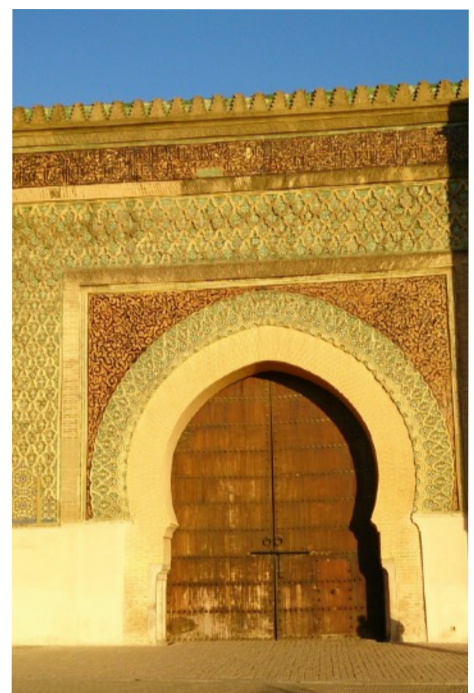
Fez is an explosion of colour, grand buildings, history and life. Founded in the 8th century Fez was the home to scholars, astronomers, mathematicians, philosophers and artisans. It is the home of the world's first university. This history is reflected in some of its buildings but the real treat of Fez is its colourful, busy, sensual, intriguing, fascinating and labyrinthine medina (Fez medina is also the world's largest car free urban area, but watch out for the uber donkeys doing deliveries).

After checking into our riad and if there is time before dinner, we will take a late afternoon walk around the medina for orientation before returning for a sundowner.

Accommodation: Riad Salama or similar
Included B/D

Day 9 Friday, 10 May 2024 Fez

This morning, we will have a tour of Fez with a visit to the Royal Palace, the Mellah (Jewish quarter) followed by a walk through the Unesco



World Heritage, mind boggling ancient medina and Fes El-Bali. Morocco has quite a large Jewish community. Many Jewish people immigrated from Spain fleeing religious persecution in Spain and other parts of Europe. When the invading Spanish armies entered the towns and villages of the Rif Valley in the 1920s they were amazed to hear a form of medieval Castilian being spoken by the Jewish community.

Fez has various claims to nobility as one of the most prestigious cities in the Muslim world and is also the oldest of the imperial cities and the capital of the first Arab dynasty of Morocco. You will visit the not to be missed Tanner's



quarters, small Moroccan art and craft museums, the most colourful Souk el-Attarine, Fondouk el-Nejjarine and the Medersa Bouanania, a dazzling example of architectural refinement. You will pass the Medersas and the Al Karaouiyne University, which has existed for the past 1000 years and see craftsmen working in the narrow lanes much as they had done for centuries. We will have a short odiferous visit to the tanneries holding your bunches of mint to keep the smells at bay.

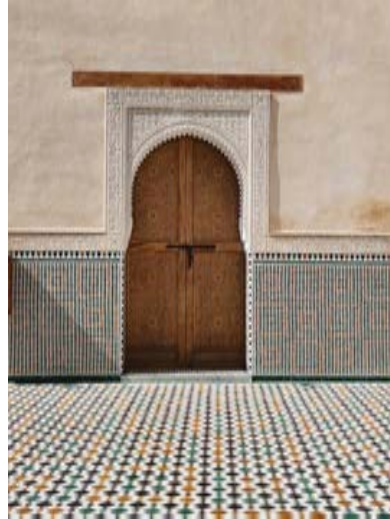
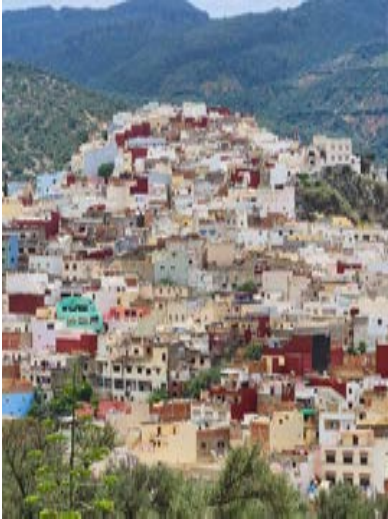
Morad will take you to some hidden galleries so you can see some of the amazing world renowned craftsmanship of Fez. Fez is known for its Music Festival held in June each year.

We will also visit the ceramic and mosaic factory (and oddly enough, it also served the best coffee I have had in Morocco). There is so much to take in during a tour of Fez that you will be exhausted by the end of the day. We will return to our riad where you can relax and rattle those duty free bags before dinner which will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Riad Salama
Included: B/L/D



We leave Fez after an early breakfast, for the drive to the Imperial City of Meknes, founded at the end of the 17th century and once the capital of Morocco during the reign of the revered tyrant Moulay Ismail – one of Morocco's most glorious and notorious Sultans. The visit will include the Bab El Mansour gate, and the old



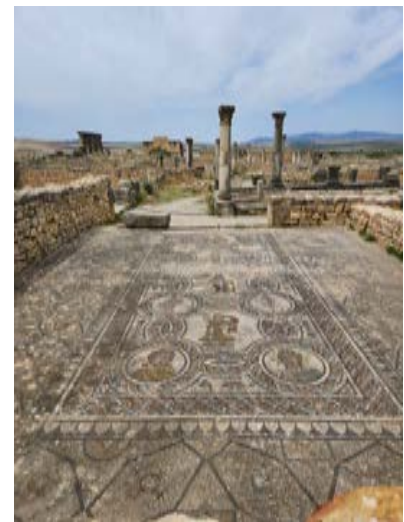
Medina. After exploring Meknes drive onto Moulay Idriss, about 30 kms to the mausoleum of Moulay Ismail and Volubilis. The mausoleum has been recently reopened after many years of restoration. The mausoleum and palace offer a rewarding and interesting visit. Think you are from a large family?, Moulay Idriss had 83 brothers and half brothers (and went on to have

hundreds of his own children) and as we all know, once you have conquered your family you are well positioned to take over the country. He was a busy bloke, a bloody war to conquer the country, a ruthless reign, plundering the country, enslaving many Europeans kidnaped by pirates, an incredible building campaign (although much of Meknes and Volubilis was ruined by the 1755 earthquake (the same one that flattened Lisbon)) and even courting the hand of King Louis XIV of France's daughter (unsuccessful). After his death his empire withered, nonetheless he is considered to be the father of modern Morocco.

After lunch we continue to the ruined Roman city of Volubilis that dates back to the 1st and 2nd centuries. It is the most well preserved archaeological site in Morocco and was declared a Unesco World Heritage site in 1997. Its most amazing features are its many preserved beautiful mosaics. While we stroll around



this grand open museum we can wonder about the incredible extent of the Roman Empire and their engineering might.



We drive back to Fez and our medina where you can have some free time before dinner where you can join Bill on



his quest to find the perfect bastilla. We have all heard of cous cous and targines but a bastilla is a speciality. It is a savoury-sweet pie made with wafer thin filo-like pastry stuffed with pigeon or chicken, cooked with caramelised onion, lemon, eggs and toasted sugared almonds then dusted with cinnamon.

Accommodation: Riad Salama
Included: B/L/D

Day 11 Sunday, 12 May 2024 Our food day

We have had a couple of longish days on the road behind us and another tomorrow, and as this is a Sunday morning we will have an easy morning. Sleep in, enjoy the garden or wander into the souk and pick up a bite to eat. After lunch will be another cooking session with Luke and our Moroccan chef. We will focus on main dishes today. Luke and our Moroccan chef will show you how to make them plus one or two other local specialties. What we produce will be our dinner. Not interested in cooking? then it is free time to explore or depending on the numbers, Bill will take you on a little excursion.

Accommodation: Riad Salama
Included: B/D



Day 12 Monday, 13 May 2024

Fes – Chefchaouen – Tangier

Most of today we will be travelling (about 330km). We journey through beautiful Moroccan countryside to the seaside city of Tangiers. However we will have one significant and colourful stop at Chefchaouen, a beautiful Berber village in the Rif Mountains. The colour blue is everywhere, on the houses, in the streets. Chefchaouen was an isolated closed community and quite xenophobic. Christians were not allowed to enter Chefchaouen on pain of death (stay close to Morad). It remained this way more or less until the 1920's when the Spanish occupied the Rif Valley. We will walk the laneways of the medina and have lunch there before continuing on to Tangier. We will have lunch in a cafe near Chefchaouen.



Tangier is the closest city in Morocco to Europe and the architecture reflects these influences. It was also an International City until 1956 and was governed by 8 different countries and has a long and intriguing history.

Tonight our beautiful riad is in the Kasbar of Tangiers (the Kasbar refers to an older part of town, usually fortified and surrounded by ramparts or protective walls). The roof top has beautiful views over the old city fortifications and the Mediterranean Sea. It is the perfect gin and tonic terrace – hopefully your duty free has made it this far!

Accommodation: Riad La Tangerina or similar

Included: (B/L/D)

Day 13 Tuesday, 14 May 2024

Tangier

Tour of the Kasbar, medina and food market. The medina usually refers to the old walled section of a town, with intriguing narrow lanes, ally ways and dead ends. Crammed within the Madina are spice shops, stores, artisans, riads, all-in-all a feast of curiosities. The kasbar is usually found within the madina.

In the afternoon we head to Morad's brother Hassan's house for lunch. Hassan and his Spanish partner Mayta will cook for us while we chill on the terrace. After lunch we head to the picturesque coastal town of Azilah for a late afternoon stroll before heading back to Tangier. Find your own dinner at a local cafe, but we don't think you'll need it!

Accommodation: Riad La Tangerina

Included: B/L

Day 14 Wednesday, 15 May 2024

Tangier

Cooking morning at the Riad with Luke. Continue the afternoon tour around Tangier or perhaps a final visit to the souk for some souvenir shopping. If you are not a keen bargainer, Morad will be able to help you drive a special price.

Accommodation: Riad La Tangerina

Included: B/L/D

Day 15 Thursday, 16 May 2024

Tangier

Farewell Lunch in the garden of Morad's house with a view over the Straits of Gibraltar to Spain. The local country ladies,(Jiblia), will prepare our food and welcome you to watch and participate. We return to our riad. Sort yourselves for dinner at a neighbourhood cafe, however, we don't think that you will need it after our long lunch. Farewell drinks on the terrace overlooking the medina and Mediterranean.

Accommodation: Riad Tangerina Tangiers

Included: B/L

Day 16 Friday 17 May, 2024 Tour ends

After an early breakfast we will drive back to Casablanca international airport for your forward travel. Arrange flights from the early afternoon on.



Tour costs

\$7,800

Single supplement \$1,000

Inclusions



- 14 nights stay in well chosen accommodation
- Most meals (2–3 exceptions as identified on the itinerary).
- English speaking guides throughout the entire tour.
- All transportation in a comfortable air conditioned vehicle with professional drivers and 4X4s for the Sahara desert.
- All entrance fees to the sites visited (as per the itinerary) including the YSL Jardin Majorelle
- Desert guides for the Sahara and other sites where required (eg Volubilis).
- Local Tourist Taxes

Exclusions:

- Travel to and from Morocco.
- 3 meals as specified in itinerary
- All items of a personal nature, telephone, laundry, extra gratuities for guide and driver.
- Any alcoholic or soft drinks and ad-hoc stops for coffee and snacks
- International air arrangements and all applicable taxes
- Tourist Visa if you do not have an Australian passport
- Camera fees at some Historical sights and museums
- Tips –please check with Morad for the recommended amounts

