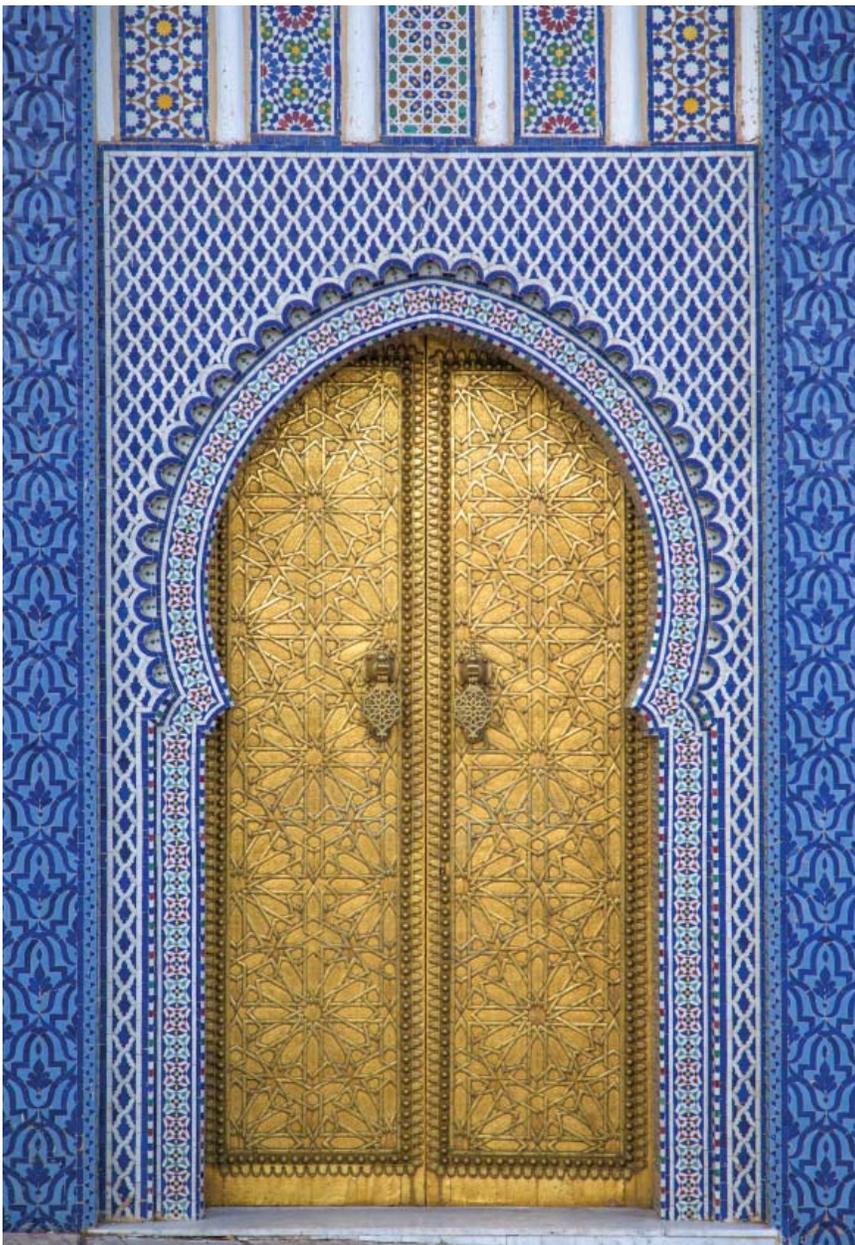




Coming Spring: The Culture & Cuisine of Morocco!



Ever dream about exotic destinations that are not on the European or Latin American tourist list? The Kingdom of Morocco is just such a place.

The government is stable, the economy is strong, and Americans are welcome! More and more in upscale restaurants around the world, Moroccan cuisine has become a favorite of discriminating patrons. In my opinion, having traveled to Morocco

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Edited by Bob Blanton

Itinerary Overview

Day 1 & 2

May 14, 2016

Departure from Charlotte,
Arrive Morocco **May 15, 2016**

Day 3

May 16, 2016

Casablanca

Day 4

May 17, 2016

Travel to Marrakesh

Day 5

May 18, 2016

Marrakesh - Koutoubia Mosque,
Palace of Bahia, Ben Youssef
Medersa, Souks, Jemaa Fna
Square

Day 6

May 19, 2016

Travel to Rabat - Kasbah of
the Ouadaya, Mohammed V
Mausoleum, Royal Palace

Day 7

May 20, 2016

Travel to Fes with stop in
Meknes - Moulay Idriss, Bab al
Mansour, Basin of Agdal, Tomb
of Moulay Ismail, Volubilis

Day 8

May 21, 2016

Fes - Royal Palace, Dal el
Qimma, The Medersa Bou
Inania, Karaouiyne Mosque,
University of Al-Karaouiyne,
Mausoleum of Moulay Idriss

Day 9

May 22, 2016

Travel from Fes to Casablanca

Day 10

May 23, 2016

Depart for Charlotte

Culture & Cuisine of Morocco

May 14 - May 23, 2016

on three previous occasions, the cuisine is one of the finest in the entire Mediterranean World. Come join us for a ten-day tour that includes four- and five-star hotels, almost all meals (except lunches), all sightseeing, and a Moroccan tour manager who will meet us at the Casablanca airport and accompany us until we return home on May 24.

Located on the northwest corner of Africa, just a short distance from Spain across the Straits of Gibraltar, Morocco has much to offer visitors from the west. Noted for its fine tradition of hand-made textiles and carpets, Morocco has unusual spices in the souks (open-air markets), along with an endless array of leather goods, unique jewelry and trinkets by the thousands!

Our airline spaces for 20 participants have been reserved on Lufthansa Airlines from Charlotte to Munich, and on to Casablanca. Our hotels, several of which are mentioned in this newsletter, are top-rated four- and five-star properties. As always, we will have our own private motorcoach, along with a 24-hour per day Moroccan tour manager. We will also be using local guides for specific sites on this itinerary. As American citizens, we are not required to purchase a visa in order to enter and leave the Kingdom of Morocco. And, as Gaston College Study Tours Director, I will be accompanying you from start to finish on this tour.



DAY 1 & 2 Saturday & Sunday, May 14-15, 2016

Relax and enjoy our scheduled flight from **Charlotte to Casablanca**, arriving early Sunday morning. Our private coach and English-speaking guide will be waiting to transfer us to our hotel in **Casablanca**.

DAY 3 Monday, May 16, 2016

Full day sightseeing with private coach and English-speaking guide.

Sightseeing tour of **Casablanca**:

- **United Nations Square** - this

lively square is the focal point of Casablanca and a popular meeting point for the city's residents.

- **Mohammed V Square** - Set around a central fountain at the heart of the city, the buildings which surround the square are fine examples of French colonial architecture.
- Explore the **Habbous Quarter** (the "new" part of the city). At the heart of this area is Casablanca's **Royal Palace**.
- Also visit the **Anfa region**. This is the oldest residential area of

[\(continued on page 3\)](#)

Morocco - Itinerary (continued from Page 2)

the city and today is the most upper-class.

- Continue to visit the **Hassan II Mosque**, which is a stunning piece of Islamic architecture and craftsmanship. It is also the largest religious monument in the world, after Mecca (entrance to Hassan II Mosque included).



- End your tour with a visit to the **Ain Diab region** of the city. The most cosmopolitan area of the city, this part of the Atlantic coast is lined with restaurants, bars and swimming pools, and this is where Casablanca's elite come to relax.
- Lunch on own - stop provided.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English speaking guide to a welcome dinner at **Basmane Restaurant**. Spend the night in Casablanca at the Novotel Casablanca City Center (WiFi included).

DAY 4

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Travel from Casablanca to **Marrakesh**. Full day private coach and English speaking guide for transfer to Marrakesh. Group lunch en route at local restaurant (group's own arrangement and cost). Afternoon free for independent exploration.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to dinner at **Palais Gharnata**. Spend the night in Marrakesh at the Hotel Atlas Medina & Spa (WiFi included).

DAY 5

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Full day private coach and English-speaking guide for sightseeing in Marrakesh.

Sightseeing tour of Marrakesh:

- The **Koutoubia Mosque** - Morocco's most famous mosque built in the 12th century whose minaret is regarded as a symbol of Marrakesh.
- The **Palace of Bahia** - "The Brilliant One" was built during the last quarter of 19th century so that Ba Ahmed, chamberlain of the Sultan Alaouites Moulay El-Hassan, could live there with his four wives and 24 concubines. On a surface of eight hectares, it shelters nearly 150 parts. Planted patios, riads cypress and rare plants, splendid fountains and basins form a true labyrinth.
- **Ben Youssef Medersa** - An Islamic school attached to the Ben Youssef Mosque, is home to



some of the most beautiful art and architecture in Marrakesh. The Medersa, where students memorized the Qur'an, was founded by the Merenid Sultan Abou el Hassan in the 14th century.

- **Souks** - (open-air markets) of Marrakesh. You will be taken on a shopping tour to the colourful souks. Explore the market, which is divided into smaller souks according to goods sold. This grand labyrinth features hand-crafted Moroccan goods such as babouche slippers, woodworks, brass works, ironworks, bronze works, jewellery, kaftans, carpets, spices, and pottery.

You will also be able to visit the best galleries for leather,

[\(continued on page 4\)](#)



Morocco - Itinerary (continued from Page 3)



antiques and hand crafted gold jewellery. Take home Moroccan artifacts as reminders of this unforgettable shopping tour in Marrakesh.

- The **Jemaa Fna Square**, Marrakesh's main square and open-air theater. During the day, see snake charmers, henna tattoo artists, and orange juice vendors. At night the square fills to become of carnival of entertainers.
- Lunch on own, stop provided

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to a group dinner at **Jad Mahal** (own cost). Spend the night in Marrakesh at the Hotel Atlas Medina & Spa (WiFi included).

DAY 6

Thursday, May 19, 2016

Travel to **Rabat** from Marrakesh. Full day private coach and English speaking guide for transfer to Rabat with a group lunch en route at local restaurant (own cost).

Afternoon sightseeing tour of **Rabat**:

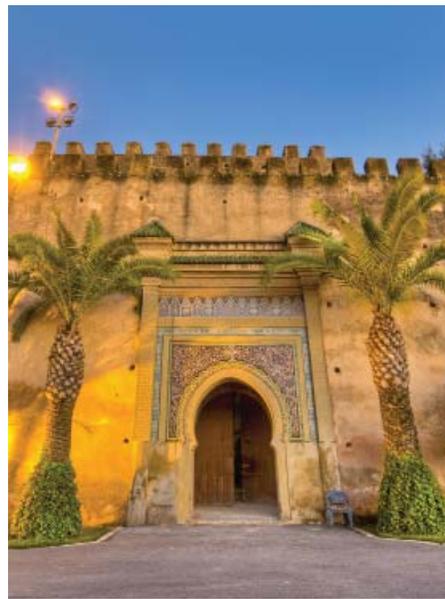
- **Kasbah of the Ouadaya** and the **Ouadaya Gate**: Built by the Almohad dynasty who knocked down the existing Kasbah when they took control of the city in 1150AD. The complex contains a palace and a mosque.
- **Mohammed V Mausoleum**:

Thought to be one of the finest examples of modern Alaouites dynasty architecture, and one of the most famous buildings in Rabat, the Mausoleum contains the bodies of Mohammed V and his two sons.

- **The Royal Palace**: Walk around the outer walls of this beautiful palace, the official residence of the current ruler, King Hassan II.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to group dinner at **Le Zeryab**. Spend the night in Rabat at the Hotel Mercure Sherazade (WiFi included).



DAY 7

Friday, May 20, 2016

Travel from Rabat to **Fes**, with stop in **Meknes** in route. Full day private coach and English-speaking guide, transfer to Meknes.

Stop in **Meknes** for sightseeing tours:

- Explore the former Imperial **City of Meknes**, hailed as the Versailles of Morocco. See

its historical attractions such as the impressive ramparts, monumental gates and the **Moulay Ismail mausoleum**.

At its height of glory, Meknes had no less than 50 palaces, 20 gates and a city wall that was 45 kilometres long.

- **Moulay Idriss**: The holiest town in Morocco, it offers panoramic views across to the town of Meknes. The town houses the shrine of Idriss I, who founded the Idriss dynasty in the 8th century.
- **Bab al Mansour**: This monumental gate is one of the most beautiful gates in Morocco.
- **Basin of Agdal**: The stone-lined lake of Agdal was both a reservoir and a pleasure lake.
- **Tomb of Moulay Ismail**: The mausoleum of the most famous ruler of Meknes, this sanctuary is renowned for its healing powers. Admire the mosaics, marble fountains, carved cedar ceilings and carpeted floors of the elegant courtyard.
- **Volubilis**: Archaeological site in Morocco situated near Meknes between Fez. Volubilis features the best preserved Roman ruins in this part of northern Africa. In 1997 the site was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



(continued on page 5)

Morocco - Itinerary (continued from Page 4)

Group Lunch at **Villa des Pins**. Afternoon on your own for independent exploration of Fes.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to group dinner at **Riad Fes**. Spend the night in Fes at **Hotel Palais Medina & Spa** (WiFi included).



DAY 8

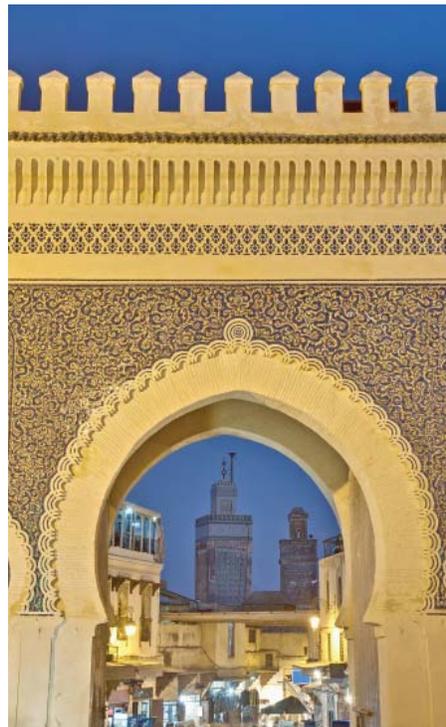
Saturday, May 21, 2016

Spend a full day of sightseeing in **Fes** in our private coach with the English-speaking guide.

Sightseeing tour of Fes:

- **The Royal Palace** comprised of 80 hectares of land, and the Palace compound includes beautiful gardens, mosques and also an ancient Medersa (a school) for Koran studies whose origin can be traced back to the 14th century. General public is barred from entering the Palace, however, it is an impressive sight from the outside.

- **Dal el Qimma**, a palace within the Royal Palace is also renowned for its beautifully painted ceilings and intricate mosaic works. The palace was built in the 17th century and is situated right in the Center of Fes el Jaded. Part of it still serves as the residence of the king of Morocco when he visits this area.
- **The Medersa Bou Inania** functions as both an educational institute and as a congregational mosque. The Medersa became one of the most important religious places of Fes and Morocco, gaining the status of Grand Mosque.
- Take advantage of the photo stop at the imposing gates of **Bab Boujloud**, the splendid fountain at **Place Nejjarine**, and the ancient ramparts.
- **Karaouiyne Mosque**, which is considered Morocco's finest seat of learning.



- **University of Al-Karaouiyne**. Founded in 859 as a religious school or Medersa, the university is one of the leading spiritual and educational centers of the Muslim world.
- **The Mausoleum of Moulay Idriss II** is located in Fes, the third largest city in Morocco, at the 'Place de Marche Verte'. The building of the shrine began in 1717 and was completed in 1824. It has since become the medina's holiest shrine. Non-Muslim visitors are not able to go see the saint's grave, the sanctuary that surrounds it or the inside of the shrine. Although this limits what you can see, the outside of the shrine is beautiful and well worth seeing.
- Lunch on own, stop provided.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to group dinner at Palais Tazi. Spend the night in Fes at the **Hotel Palais Medina & Spa** (WiFi included).

DAY 9

Sunday, May 22, 2016

Travel from Fes to Casablanca by private coach with English-speaking guide. The afternoon will be free for independent exploration.

Evening:

Roundtrip transportation with English-speaking guide to group dinner at **Rick's Cafe**. Spend the night in Casablanca at the **Novotel Casablanca City Center** (WiFi included).

DAY 10

Monday, May 23, 2016

Depart Morocco for Charlotte.

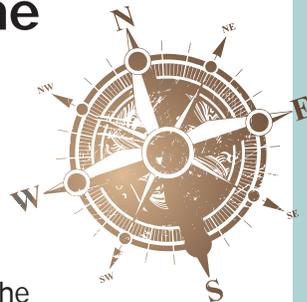
What is Included in the Tour Package



- Round trip airfare with a major carrier on scheduled flights and guaranteed dates
- All airport taxes and fuel surcharges (which will not change after time of enrollment for any participant)
- Accommodation in four and five-star hotels in twin rooms with private facilities guaranteed throughout. Private room accommodations are available for an additional cost (approximately \$450 for the 10-day program)
- A filling breakfast every day to get the day started well throughout your touring program
- A full dinner on all evenings except on May 18
- A full-time Tour Director to accompany your group 24 hours a day from arrival to departure
- The expertise and perspective of local guides during your tour
- All excursions, cultural activities and (several pre-booked) admissions as per your itinerary
- Transportation by private coach for airport transfers and touring
- Basic health insurance while on tour (including medical treatment on tour up to \$7,500) and \$50,000 of coverage for emergency evacuation and repatriation

What is NOT included in the Tour Package

- Lunches; and dinner on one evening (May 18)
- Valid passport (Visas are not required for US citizens)
- Tips and gratuities for the guide and driver
- Any fees that might be imposed by the airlines at the airport for checked baggage
- Travel insurance - We offer and always recommend our Trip Mate travel insurance policy to all participants. This comprehensive policy includes health, property and cancellation coverage at a cost of \$149 (unless your base program price is in excess of \$5,000, in which case the cost of the insurance will be \$199).
- Cost of Gaston College registration.



All-Inclusive Tour Price

\$3,577 per person, double-occupancy, based on 20 paying participants.

Reservation Form
Culture & Cuisine of Morocco
May 14-23, 2016

Full name (as it appears on your passport):

Current address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Valid passport number (for airlines): _____

Expiration date: _____

Note: Many foreign countries now require that your passport be valid at least 6 months after you end your visit. Make sure yours will meet this requirement.

I wish to room with: _____

I require a private room at additional cost: _____

Special dietary/health needs (for hotels/airlines): _____

- I am covered by my own health/hospitalization insurance policy while overseas. You must provide proof.
- I plan to purchase additional health/hospitalization insurance from Trip Mate at an additional cost.

The \$149 payment for additional insurance must be included with your initial deposit check.

Reservations

Culture & Cuisine of Morocco May 14-23, 2016 Reservation Form:

Please complete all information on this form, detach it and send it along with a check in the amount of \$500 per person (plus insurance premium if you purchase our company's policy), made payable to GASTON COLLEGE STUDY TOURS, and send to:

Bob Blanton,
Study Tours Director
Box 76
Gaston College
Dallas, NC 28034-1499

No space can be reserved without receipt of your deposit. Tour deposits are nonrefundable except in cases where we can resell your space on the tour. All prices, based upon a minimum of 20 paying participants, are valid at the time of this printing, but are subject to change. Tours are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Balance payments will be due approximately 90 days prior to departure.

Information

Contact Bob Blanton,
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PHOTOS FROM OUR MOST RECENT STUDY TOUR TO CROATIA/VENICE...



<<<<Waterfall in the Plitvice National Park, Croatia

Rovinj, Croatia>>>>



Group photo at the gate of Diocletian's Palace in Split

<<<<Croatian coastal town of Skradin

Venetian canals>>>>

