



# **An Informative Guided Tour of Marrakech, Morocco**

**Everything you need to know to create a  
magical experience.**

**Authored with love by The Motoroamers**





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## An Informative Guided Tour of Marrakech, Morocco

Morocco's fourth largest city is a bit like marmite; people either love it or hate it. Having a Guided Tour of Marrakech will ensure that you fall into the first category and thereby surrender to the charms that are embedded into the soul of this 'Red City'. Let us take you on a tour through our words and pictures and inspire you with our Interactive Maps, that will seamlessly guide you around this evocative city. Are you ready? Let's go!

**"...Marrakech ought to be earned as a destination. The journey is the preparation for the experience. Reaching it too fast derides it, makes it a little less easy to understand." — Tahir Shah, author**



Marrakech, and in fact Morocco as a whole, is a sensory explosion and having the privilege of driving through this African beauty certainly does prepare you for what is to come. With a reputation for being touristy, full of people waiting to scam you and a terrifying souk that will consume you, it's not surprising that many choose to by-pass Marrakech. So having visited and done six personal tour over the last year, I feel confident and experienced enough to lay that reputation aside and replace it with vibrance and curiosity that will have you falling for, or at the very least appreciating this magnificent city. To help prepare you, I have shaped this blog around A Guided Tour of Marrakech's Medina, A Tour of Outside of Marrakech and some Tips for making your Marrakech tour a positive experience that leaves you wanting more. And right at the end you will find the three Interactive Maps ready for you to download.





# 1. A Guided Tour of Marrakech's Medina





## An Informative Guided Tour of Marrakech, Morocco

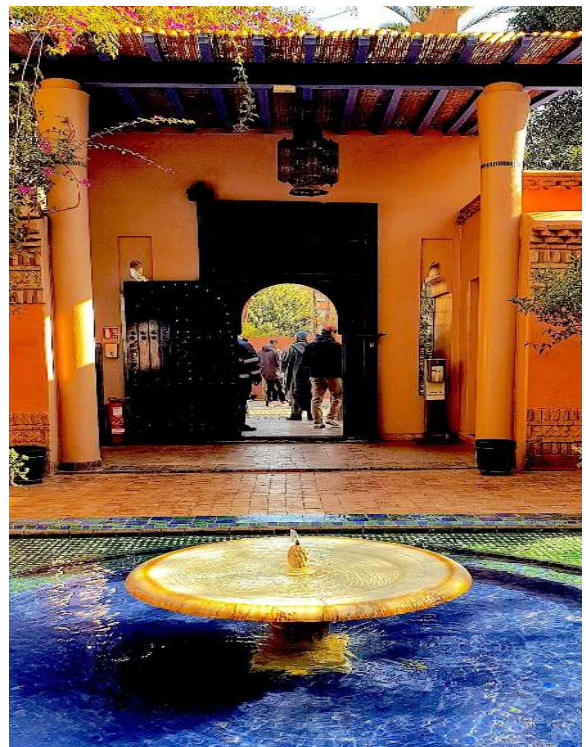
The Red City, aptly named thanks to its sandstone walls that surround the old medina, holds an adventure that will tantalise every single one of your senses. Its fortified status gives a lure of history that dates back to the Almoravid Dynasty of 11th century, offering tales that will satisfy every history lover.

The medina has been awarded **UNESCO** status; so profoundly, that each of the buildings contributing to its status are considered worthy of the UNESCO label on their own merits. I will endeavour to guide you around these treasures with the grace they each deserve.

## The Medina

Marrakech's UNESCO medina is the beating heart of the old town, embraced by 19km of walls. With iconic cultural and historical buildings, visiting the medina is a mind-blowing experience. Fill your mind's eye with colours, sights of monkeys, snake-charmers and Berber culture that keeps their heritage alive. Explore the shops that offer visitors and locals alike, a plethora of incredibly crafted goods. Soak up the atmosphere, that once through the exquisite gates, magically transport you to another world. Allow the smells of spices to intoxicate you and feel the air brush past you as you navigate the frenetic activity of the souk alleyways.

The medina holds a very special secret that when you enter its walls will enthrall you and educate in equal measure.



## Souks

Souks across Morocco are without doubt the most evocative and exotic experiences you can have. Add to that expectation, Marrakech having the largest souk in the country and you will either feel anticipation or fear at the thought of your Guided Tour. With 18 different souk specialities, Marrakech's labyrinth of alleyways has the potential for getting you lost amongst the heady smells and sights that you will encounter. Although with a few mindful [strategies](#) that will keep you confident and mesmerised, they will touch your soul in a way you never thought possible.

Colours shine in your eyes like an enigmatic rainbow. Smells permeate through your nostrils making you salivate despite your full belly. The narrow passageways have no 'right of way' rules, so chaos rules as donkey carts, scooters, pedestrians and bicycles all vie for their own claim of the 'roads'. Eyes and ears are needed in the back of your head to navigate the alleyways, although as long as you expect this crazy activity, then you can ease yourself into humour rather than fear. A simple smile, hand to heart and 'non merci' will bat away any requests to join the local sellers in their 'shop', unless of course of want to buy what they are offering. Navigating a souk does require some well-defined techniques, which when adopted will have you floating through the mayhem with ease. [Check out my blog](#) that I have dedicated to this very topic.





## The Square – Jemaa el Fna

Jemaa el Fna, which with its Berber translation of 'The Gathering Area of the Dead', is one of Marrakech's most popular and cultural destinations within the medina walls. With visions of Indiana Jones in our heads, this incredible central hub attracts tourists and locals into its entertaining arms. Around the outside there are restaurants, all with panoramic terraces that give you an arial view of the square with relative 'safety'.

Daytime will present you with herbal stalls full of greenery and eager young sellers of fruit juices with colourful displays that plead for your purchase. In the centre Henna ladies sit with their chairs waiting for the next customer keen on having their hands or feet decorated. (A word of caution, I would suggest avoiding these ladies, as their practices have been questionable and reported as having dangerous reactions. Instead visit the [Henna Cafe](#) for safe Henna decoration with certificated designers.)

As you wonder around the square, you will be struck by the sounds of the flutes and drums teasing the cobras, the laughter of the crowds and the musicians who make this their home. Be prepared that if you take photos you will be asked for a donation; do not get caught up their demands for 300MAD. We were advised to pay no more than 10-30MAD. Just be prepared for some resistance. Ensure you take some change.



At night, as the sun sets for the day, the Square takes on a whole new personality. Red and orange skies that match the city walls, create the backdrop for a spectacular transformation. 4.00pm signals the moment that carts and trollies arrive to their allotted pitch number and over the next couple of hours, each and every day, Street Food stalls set themselves up with their temporary kitchens and seating areas. The sun's final rays are accompanied by the Call to Prayers that echo around the square, and people pour, like ants from the various entry points into Jemaa. A completely new vibe swathes across the rooftops and it is magnificent to witness. So if you can, time your visit for at least one night in the Jemaa el Fna square.



## The Royal Palaces

There are amazing palaces to indulge the historian and the architect within you. With ruins dating back to the 16th century at the beautifully preserved Badi Palace, to the more intricate display of 19th century artistry at the Bahia Palace; you can immerse yourself amongst the royal ghosts who stepped upon their mosaic floors. Or you could check out the Saadian Tombs which are a royal necropolis waiting to be admired. We've not been into the Tombs ourselves, as there's always a choice to be made about how much to do and the reviews that I've read show more positivity towards the Badi and Bahia Palaces. You'll make up your own minds based on what appeals most to you.





## The Gardens

Whether you choose to walk through the fountain adorned gardens to the south of the famous Koutoubia mosque or the oasis that is sheltered in the heart of the souk, [Le Jardin Secret](#), peace is guaranteed in Marrakech gardens. Le Jardin Secret is a stunning example of a royal Riad with its archetypal quadrangle and fabulous tower that overlooks the rooftops of the medina and you'll be delighted by the respite it offers from the crazy alleyways.



## Museums and monuments

Marrakech has an abundance of UNESCO awarded museums and monuments that make up the appeal of this magnificent city. Whether it is to delve into the past and walk in the footsteps of history's Berbers, or gaze up at the 70m minaret of the Koutoubia mosque, you will have plenty to amuse yourself with on a guided tour of Marrakech. Three of my favourite museums are actually not too far away from each other, in the heart of the souk.

The first is the [Ben Youseff Madrasa](#) which is an Islamic College that dates back to 14th century. It was used as a library and a mosque during its early years, although fell in disrepair in 18th century. It has now been restored to its former glory, and for 50MAD pp is a stunning piece of architecture that will have you mesmerised. It's only a short visit, no more than about 45 minutes although incredibly photogenic.

The other destination we love, is the [Marrakech Museum](#), housed in the Dar Menebhi Palace, former residence of Mehdi Mnebhi, who was the Defence Minister of Abdelaziz of Morocco. Again for 50MAD you can while away at least 90 minutes, if not more, as you wander around the different rooms that are all intrinsically decorated in true Moroccan style with an Andalusian flair. This building took my breath away and actually left me feeling quite emotional. It is definitely value for money.



## Cafés and Restaurants

Whilst we entertain you with sensory images of souks, magnificent museums and fine palaces, you might find yourself building up a thirst or a rumbling tummy. So here are three of our favourite places to rest a while, watch the world go by whilst satiating your hunger.

The first suggestion is from of the Premier League of Cafés. If you adore a wee cup of coffee and perhaps the odd cake, you will absolutely love this place. The [El Bacha Café](#) (and I can't miss mentioning that it is also a museum, which is a beautiful introduction to this landmark building.) Whilst currently held up by scaffolding after the earthquake of 2023, as ever with Morocco buildings, the inside is immaculate and divine. You pay 60MAD pp for entry to both the museum and the café/restaurant. Or you could just pay 10MAD to enter the café only. If it is your first time, I would strongly recommend paying the full price so that you can wander around this incredible museum, which has some ancient artefacts. And then there's the café. If I'm honest, I could write an entire evocative blog just about this place alone. Although I'll endeavour to keep it succinct. So a café – well think the Ritz, in London without so much pomp. This place is an absolute treat and is a must for your Marrakech itinerary. With 200 coffees to choose from you'll be in for a right treat. I promise.



**Top Tip;** arrive at 0930 and queue until it opens at 1000 so that you get the first sitting. Otherwise, so popular is this place, that you will be waiting for between 60-90 minutes. If the front desk say there's a long wait, then I also recommend buying your ticket, registering with the ladies on the café reception, where they will give you a beeper that will vibrate when your table is ready. That then gives you a chance to explore the museum or may be even start to explore the souk and come back in time for your treat.



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The next stop on your gastronomic tour is [Le Jardin](#) Restaurant. With its archetypal oasis of calm amidst the chaos, this stunning 3 tiered restaurant serves lovely food at a reasonable price. With trees growing through the courtyard and panoramic tables up above, this is a lovely place to stop for some food.

And finally, our chosen place at the Jemaa el Fna Square is Argana. With a café on the ground floor and a restaurant on the top two floors, if you're lucky to get a window seat, the views across the square are fabulous. It's such a great place to people watch from a distance.

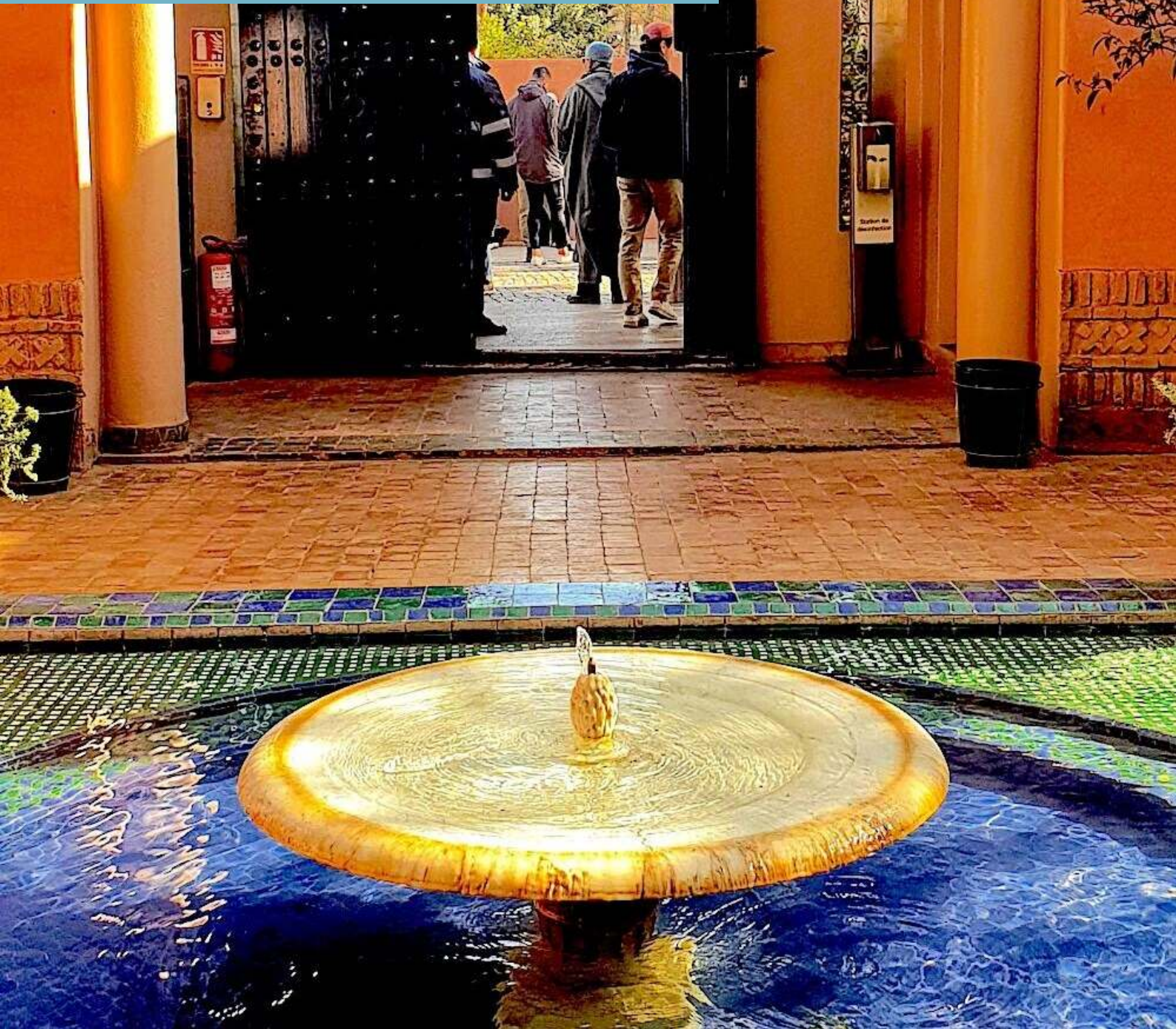
**Top Tip;** if you can arrive for around 4.00pm then you get to watch the square transform into its nighttime attire where the Street Food stall arrive. It's quite an atmosphere. Plus you have the setting sun, if you're there during autumn and winter. Your guided tour of Marrakech is not complete without food and drink, so hopefully these suggestions will help refuel you.







## 2. A Guided Tour of Marrakech – outside the medina





Of course we are drawn to the heady sights and sounds of Marrakech's old town; that's why we come. Although please do not rush off after a couple of days. There's so much more to see. Let me see if I can tempt you.

### Le Jardin Majorelles

Located just outside the medina walls, this space holds a beautiful tranquility, which will throw you off kilter. Wherever you have travelled from, you will undoubtedly have encountered Marrakech's traffic chaos. It's crazy, although somehow it seems to work. And yet, once you walk through the gates of **Le Jardin Majorelles** it is like being transported into Alice in Wonderland or Narnia.

The sounds of the city fade into obscurity and the gentle melody of the Bulbuls ring in your ears. With Moroccan colours, botanical plants and cactus fused with beautifully designed buildings, this garden is a must see for a couple of hours. Originally created in the early 1920's Yves St Laurent fell in love with this garden and bought it in 1980 and has been buried here.



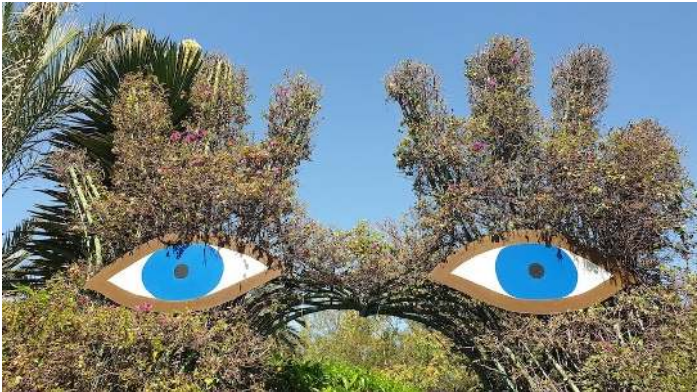
### Anima Gardens, Ourika

Just 45 minutes south of the city, you will find the enigmatic **ANIMA**. Created by Austrian André Keller in 2011 this is art and an exotic garden blended together. With the backdrop of the Atlas mountains, the gardens, the café and the maze, will delight visitors of all ages.

This is so much more than a garden, this is a landscaped art gallery. You will lose yourself amongst the paths that weave around this unique garden, bringing out the child in you as you find yourself intrigued by what's around the corner.

Whatever season you come, ANIMA will delight. There is a free shuttle bus that leaves the car park just behind Koutoubia Mosque at 9-30am and 2.30pm, although you must reserve on-line, as there is a limited capacity on the shuttle. It costs 140MAD pp for entry into the gardens, which you can purchase through their website or pay for it at the ticket desk.







## Ourika Valley

If you have the chance to either hire a car or you have a camper van, then a trip further down past ANIMA will bring you to the Ourika Valley. A paradise nestled in the High Atlas mountains. Due to the damage to the area during the earthquake, the roads in December 2023 were not passable with a motorhome, so care should be taken. Repairs are underway, so I suggest you keep an eye on the situation. Certainly a camper van could pass through the area with caution.

The valley's main feature is the ice-blue mountain river that flows throughout the year. With atmospheric restaurants offering basic Moroccan food, you can sit beside the refreshing waters as you tuck into your Tagine. The village of Setti Fatma is a typical Berber community that survives thanks to the growing tourist trade.

Albeit a long day with at least a 90 minute drive from Marrakech, it is a unique and unmissable experience. If you have good walking legs, then the hike up to the 7 waterfalls might be right up your street. If not then just the drive into the mountains and a cooling rest for lunch will easily fill your day.









## Cactus Thiemann Farm

Located just north of the city close to the Football Stadium, you will find Africa's largest Cactus farm, [Cactus Thiemann](#). An obscure haven that was the brain-child of German Hans Thiemann who made Marrakech his home and turned his passion for botany into a lifetime's creation back in 1964.

It's one of those places that you could by-pass so easily and yet is a joy. 16 hectares of beautifully planted and architectural cacti await your visit. With a cafe and shop you can easily while away a couple of hours here. Close enough to the city to be reachable yet far enough out to be in the country. Cactus Thiemann is a must.

It is especially easy to reach if you are staying at Le Relais Camping, which is just a 20 minute walk away. It costs 80MAD pp to enter and with a café and 150 different species of cacti, you will while away at least a couple of hours. **Top Tip;** open on Wednesday to Sunday only and the gardens are closed throughout August.







### 3. Top Tips for a safe Guided Tour of Marrakech



## Top Tips for a memorable Guided Tour of Marrakech.

Follow these tips to ensure you have a positively memorable guided tour of Marrakech. Less fear, less anxiety and a heap more enjoyment from a city that keeps on giving. Alongside my complementary blog about navigating [Souks in Morocco](#), you will be armed with knowledge, maps and savvy to help you feel the soul of this sensory Imperial city.

Marrakech, as we have learnt from other cities we have visited, needs more than one day. A minimum of 3 days will give you a far richer and diverse experience. The more the better.

If you travel by motorhome, then it would be an all-rounded experience to either book a Riad in the city or park up at the Guardian parking just outside the city walls, west of the Koutoubia Mosque. This way you get to experience Marrakech by night, which is an altogether different experience.

If you come to Marrakech by plane, then it is definitely worth hiring a car. Now I'll be honest, you do need nerves of steel to drive through the city, although having done it many times in a car and the motorhome, you just need to drive with confidence and behave a little bit like the locals. It might be worth taking out [Excess Insurance](#) as we have done in case of any accidents. It costs around £60 for the year and, in our opinion is well worth it.

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For ladies, dress conservatively to be respectful of Muslim values and cultural norms. Cover shoulder and legs with pashminas, cotton trousers or long skirts.







7. If you don't have the confidence for a hire car, and who could blame you, there are other ways to get around the outer perimeter of Marrakech. There are the Yellow Taxis, who all wait like a hive of bees at the airport or buzz around the centre like flies. They are though, be warned very expensive as with any city centre taxi.

The alternative is to check out InDrive, which is a fabulous, relative newcomer to the global stage. Here in Morocco it has been around for about 3 years and although somewhat controversial as you might imagine, it's a much fairer system of transport that doesn't fleece the tourist. We use them all the time and they offer an efficient and reasonable service. It's similar to Uber without the need to give bank details, which we prefer. Just download the free app.

8. If your first experience of the Red City has been tainted in some way, please give it another go. With the interactive maps I've created and these blogs, you have all that you need for a positive guided tour of Marrakech. I accept that like us, cities may not be your thing, although Marrakech is addictive for me and I, quite honestly just can't get enough. So give it a second chance.



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9. Do take time to look beyond the city, if for no other reason that to take a break from the frenetic pace of life within the walls. Whilst there are some places, as I have listed above, that are pretty close for a city-break visit, if you have more time you could venture south a couple of hours into Agfay Desert, travel three hours east to the majestic Ouzoud Falls, or drive south over the thrilling Tiz n Tichka Pass to UNESCO's Ait Benhaddou. Whilst each trip probably requires an overnight stay to prevent travel fatigue, they will give you a rich flavour of this incredible African country.

10. Morocco is a warm to hot country, all year round, generally speaking. Keep hydrated and remember that you are in a Muslim country so there will be very few places that will serve alcohol. Perhaps the larger hotels will offer some booze, although generally speaking not.

11. Before your trip, check when Ramadan falls. In 2024 it will be for one month around 10th March. For the tourist there is not too much restriction in terms of Morocco being 'open'. Although it does have an influence on the local's mood when they don't eat or drink during daylight hours – affecting how they drive and sometime interact. Also some smaller cafés may be closed or have restricted opening hours, especially at night when they return home after the sun sets for their meal. In the city the impact is less than in the countryside, although please be mindful about respecting their practice and avoid drinking and eating in public. Meals from a café or restaurant are fine.



12. And last and by no means least, don't fill your day(s) with too much activity. Something in the morning, stop for coffee. Some exploring of the souk, then lunch. Then a visit to a museum in the afternoon and home for a rest. Having had six visits in the last year, I know this rule well! So avoid overdoing it and you will have a rich city and cultural experience.





# And Finally, The Maps

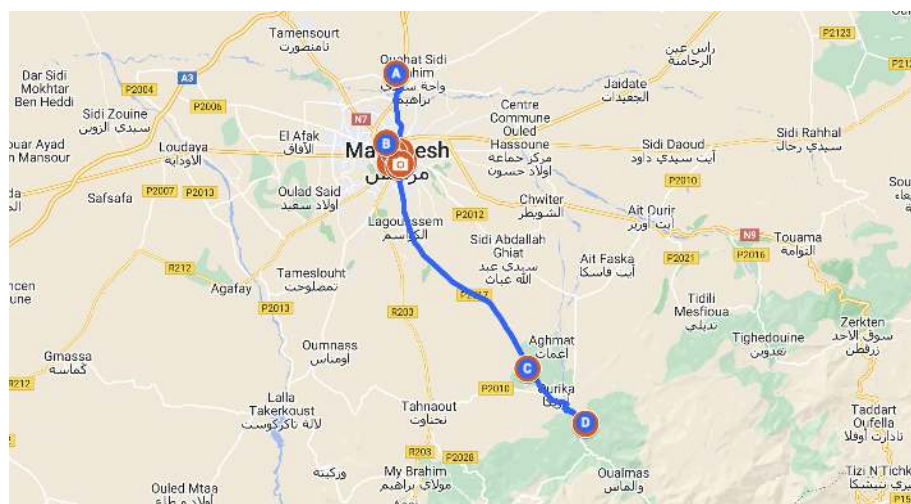
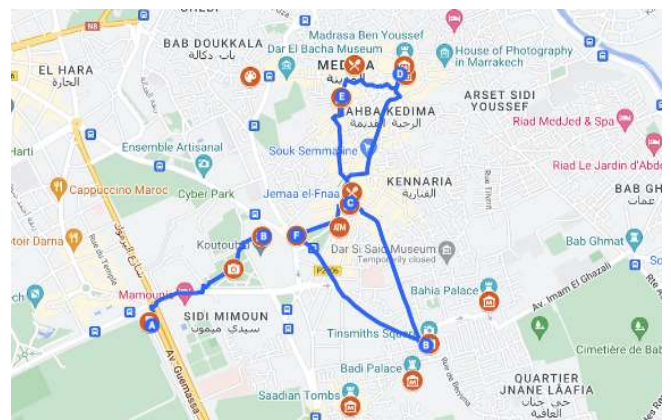
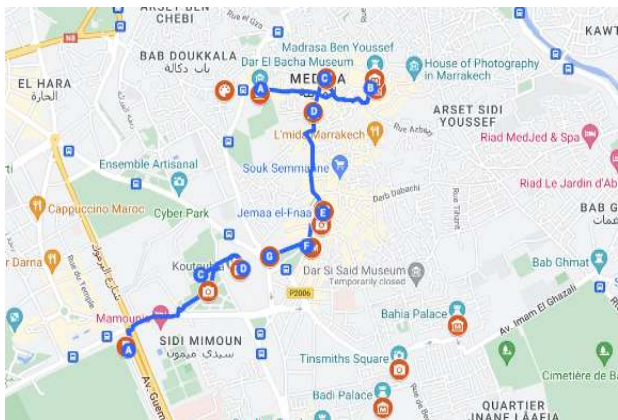


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And so, that is my Informative Guided Tour of Marrakech. I hope you've enjoyed the ride.

The final thing to leave you with are my Interactive Maps that you can download to your Google Maps or plot for yourself on your offline Map buddy [Maps.me](https://maps.me). With its offline facility, it can be very useful if you lose internet coverage.

Click each of these map images to access my specially designed walking and driving route maps to give you safe and delightful passage through and around Marrakech. The **first map on the left** is a tour that includes the delightful El Bacha; if you love coffee, then this is a must. **The second map on the right**, includes the Palaces to the south of the Medina. And **the bottom map** contains all the sights outside of the city walls.





# An Informative Guided Tour of Marrakech

We hope that this guide has been helpful in planning your trip to Marrakech and the surrounding areas.

Above all we hope that it will instil knowledge and confidence of making a trip here, which will be filled with colour, texture, smells and emotions that will stir you, in a way that only Morocco can.

If you have any questions feel free to email us at [themotoroamers@gmail.com](mailto:themotoroamers@gmail.com) and we'll happily share our thoughts and experiences.

Enjoy Marrakech and all that it has to offer you. It is a sensory experience that will stay with you forever.

With love as always from Karen and Myles, The Motoroamers.

