GEEO ITINERARY

Morocco 6/8/2024

Day 1: Casablanca Arrive in Casablanca at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Arrive in Casablanca at any time. Please note that this tour does not spend any time in Casablanca, and we recommend arriving a day or two early to fully explore the city. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference, overcome any jetlag, and avoid any disruption to your trip due to flight delays or cancellations. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Casablanca before the trip. If you arrive early, you can explore Casablanca's small medina, beachfront, and classic examples of Art Deco architecture. Be sure to also visit the spectacular Hassan II Mosque; entrance is only permitted via guided tours, which operate from Saturday to Thursday at 09:00, 10:00, 11:00, and 15:00. Tickets can be purchased at the mosque. Please double-check times with your hotel as they are subject to change, especially around Ramadan. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

Day 2: Casablanca/Chefchaouen (B) Travel to Tangier for a guided tour of the medina before continuing on to Chefchaouen for the evening.

Depart in the morning for Tangier. Tangier is an exotic mix of influences, located at the northern tip of Morocco. With culture, cuisine, and language coming from North Africa, Spain, Portugal, and France, this bustling port city is unique and fascinating. Take a guided tour of city sites, including the medina, kasbah, Grand Socco (a bustling square at the entrance to the medina), and Petit Socco, a little square in the medina perfect for people-watching and mint tea-drinking. Marvel at the panoramic views of Gibraltar, Tarifa, and the meeting point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. In the afternoon, continue on to Chefchaouen. Chefchaouen is a gorgeous mountain town in northern Morocco. It is often skipped when traveling the standard route around Morocco but is truly one of the most special places to visit. Set in the Rif Mountains, this town's white-washed buildings with blue accents make it one of the most picturesque places in the country. Known as the Blue City, the distinctive blue color was added by the city's Jewish population who lived there as refugees in the 1930s. The main square is lined with cafés and shops selling handicrafts that are often not available elsewhere in the country. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs (Casablanca to Tangier) by private vehicle; 2 hrs (Tangier to Chefchaouen) by private vehicle

Day 3: Chefchaouen (B) Enjoy a free day in Chefchaouen to explore.

The city of Chefchaouen, whitewashed in different shades of blue, is spectacular on its own, but with the surrounding mountains, it's a sight to behold. Options include relaxing at a traditional Hammam spa, visiting a local weavers' cooperative, and exploring the town. You may choose to lace up your hiking boots and trek through the scenic Rif Mountains, the perfect natural playground for adventure seekers. Hike for 3-4 hours along lush mountains, passing small waterfalls and streams en route to the Spanish Mosque for spectacular panoramic views of Chefchaouen. Continue on through the mountains, passing plantations and stopping for a traditional lunch at a local gîte. Once you reach the piste, jump in a jeep and head back to the main road to meet your driver. At sunset, opt to visit the Spanish Mosque for a stunning panoramic view of the city.

Day 4: Chefchaouen/Fez (B, L) Enjoy a G Adventures-supported traditional lunch before taking a guided tour of the ancient Roman ruins of Volubilis. Continue on

to Fez.

We leave Chefchaouen and drive to Meknes, where we enjoy a G Adventures-supported traditional lunch that benefits rural Moroccan women and children. Enjoy a traditional home-cooked Moroccan meal and meet some of the women that are part of this program. This lunch program provides access to education opportunities and healthcare services. The proceeds help support vocational training for rural women, allowing them to support their families and children. In the afternoon, we continue through the rolling hills to the ruins of Volubilis, the best-preserved Roman ruins in this part of Northern Africa. Listen to a certified local guide explain life in the Roman Empire at this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Peer into old bathhouses, marvel at the still-present mosaic floors, and gaze up at towering marble pillars. Hear stories about life in this Roman city that will leave you in awe of just how far their empire stretched. Afterward, continue to the imperial city of Fez, one of Morocco's most interesting cities. Fez was built by the French during their Protectorate of Morocco. This area has the feel of a French provincial town with its cafés, restaurants, and wide boulevards. Enjoy free time this evening. You may opt to spend some time in the medina checking out carpet shops, sampling local delicacies at the food stalls, or shopping for leather goods. Prepare to bargain, just don't get lost wandering the passageways! Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs (Chefchaouen to Meknes); 45 mins (Meknes to Volubilis); 2 hrs (Volubilis to Fez)

Day 5: Fez (B) Explore the labyrinth of streets within the famous Fez medina with a local guide. Take in a view of one of the ancient tanneries from above and marvel at the myriad of colors and processes.

The Fez medina is the world’s largest living medieval medina and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Enter through one of the great gates into the chaos and follow a local guide through this 1.4-sq. mile medina with more than 9,000 winding streets. We will explore the artisan quarters, sample treats from the carts, visit the mausoleum and the Al Qarawiyin University, and view Fez' famous leather tannery from above. Some buildings in the medina date back to the 9th century; there are 350 mosques in the medina that are still in use today. Please note: Only certified local Fez guides are allowed to guide in the medina. During your free time, your tour leader (a nationally certified guide) cannot accompany you here. Enjoy free time this afternoon.

Day 6: Fez/Merzouga (B,D) Enjoy a long, but beautiful, travel day across the unique landscapes of Morocco to get to the sand dunes of the Sahara Desert.

Today we have a full travel day through the diverse landscapes that make Morocco so unique. As you pass through cedar and pine forests, keep an eye out for Barbary Macaques. Pass over the Middle Atlas Mountains through the pre-desert countryside with its deep gorges filled with a splendid oasis of green palm groves, finally arriving at the sand dunes of the Sahara Desert. We spend the night in a desert auberge, located right on the edge of the dunes. Here we will have a local-style dinner and spend the night. Please note: some rooms may have shared bathroom facilities at the desert auberge. Approximate travel time: 10-11 hrs, including stops

Day 7: Merzouga (B,D) Explore the sand dunes by foot or opt to take a 4x4 excursion around the dunes. In the late afternoon, enjoy a camel ride to watch the sunset before returning to your hotel for an evening of entertainment.

Spend the cool morning relaxing or exploring the undulating golden sand of the dunes on your own. You can also pre-book an optional excursion to view the dunes of the Sahara desert on a 4x4 excursion after registering for this program. You'll be driven around the sand dunes of Erg Chebbi, taking in the views of the seemingly endless sea of sand. Pass a kohl mine en route to the village of Khamlia. Witness the delightful sounds of the African music of Gnawa, played by members of the community, as you enjoy a cup of mint tea with the locals. In the late afternoon, take a camel ride deep into the dunes to watch the sunset. Local guides will teach you how to mount and dismount and other handy camel-related safety tips. Be sure to get them to teach you the trick of tying your turban to keep the desert sun off your face and add a little flair to your photos. This evening, indulge in a traditional dinner, then gather around a campfire under the stars near to your hotel. Listen to stories about life in this region and, perhaps, some

traditional music on the drums. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by camel

Day 8: Merzouga/Todra Gorge (B) Rise early to watch the sunrise. Walk through local village farmlands before exploring the cliff-sided canyons of the mighty Todra Gorge.

Rise early to watch the sunrise. After breakfast, continue by private bus into the Todra Valley. The Todra River has carved out cliff-sided canyons through the mountains with the final 300 m of the gorge being the most spectacular, as the canyon narrows to a flat stony track as little as 10 m (33 ft) wide in places with sheer and smooth rock walls up to 160 m (525 ft) high on each side. Today, the Todra River looks more like a stream as it runs its way through the gorge, with hotels and restaurants huddled against the steep walls. It is easy to walk through the gorge, as there is a well-maintained dirt road to walk along. This scenic and serene spot is great for hiking, relaxing on the edge of the river, or sampling some local Amazigh delicacies. Approximate travel time: 3.5 hrs, including stops

Day 9: Todra Gorge/Aït Ben Haddou (B) Visit the Aït Ben Haddou Kasbah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Opt to participate in a tagine cooking class for an intro to Moroccan cuisine.

This morning, we continue along the "Route of 1,000 Kasbahs" to the thriving town of Ouarzazate for a lunch stop. This town is home to Atlas Film Studios, where many films have been shot over the years, including *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Gladiator*. Continue on to the fascinating and beautiful village of Aït Ben Haddou, a wonderful example of a kasbah (a type of fortress). Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site with your tour leader. Of all the remaining kasbahs in Morocco, the walls and interior of this area are the most intact. Like many of the earthen-built fortresses in Ouarzazate, Aït Ben Haddou has been used in many film and television productions like *Gladiator*, *Babel*, and *Game of Thrones*. In the evening, there may be a chance for an optional cooking class. Learn the secrets of how to make the perfect tagine and then sample your skills for your dinner. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs

Day: 10 Aït Ben Haddou/Aroumd (B,D) Enjoy a hike to the village of Aroumd at the base of the High Atlas Mountains. Hike up to this mountain hideaway and enjoy views of Mt. Toubkal from the gîte before a home-cooked dinner.

We leave the pre-desert country for the magnificent High Atlas Mountains landscape, crossing the Tizi n'Tichka pass at 2260 m, before heading into the splendid Toubkal National Park. We pass through small villages on winding mountain roads, arriving at the village of Imlil. With our main luggage transported for us, embark on the 1-hour hike from Imlil to the little village of Aroumd (Aremd), arriving at our simple mountain gîte for the night. Breathe in the fresh mountain air while taking in amazing views of the surrounding Atlas Mountains before sitting down to a traditional, homemade dinner made with local produce. The hike to the gîte is uphill, so take it at your own pace! Some participants have recommended hiking poles for those with knee issues. Accommodation is multi-share, up to six beds in each room. Bedding is provided, but you will need to bring your own towel. Bathroom facilities are shared. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs (Ait Ben Haddou to Imlil) by private vehicle; 1 hr (Imlil to Aroumd) on foot

Day: 11 Aroumd/Essaouira (B) Walk back to Imlil and transfer to the coastal town of Essaouira. The rest of the day is free for exploration.

After breakfast, take a scenic hike back down the mountain to meet the van in Imlil and head to the coastal town of Essaouira, arriving mid-afternoon. The rest of the day is free to explore as you wish. Essaouira is a funky, Portuguese-flavoured, hippie coastal village. Browse the many shops for leather, jewelry, lamps, or trinkets. Watch the brightly-painted ships bring their catch into the busy harbor or take a stroll along the long, sandy beach. This is the perfect place to enjoy some local seafood and unwind. Approximate travel time: 1 hr (Aremd to Imlil) on foot; 5 hrs (Imlil to Essaouira), including stops, by private vehicle

Day 12: Essaouira (B) Enjoy a free day exploring this coastal port town any way you like.

Today is free to browse the many shops, watch the brightly painted ships bring their catch into the busy harbor, or take a stroll along the long, sandy beach. It's a perfect place to enjoy some local seafood and unwind. You might even like to enjoy some of the wide variety of activities on offer such as windsurfing and horseback riding. Your tour leader can arrange camel riding on the beach in Essaouira for you. Please ask them for more details if you are interested. If you want to soothe aching muscles, you can pre-book the Traditional Hammam Experience ($60 USD) with us. In a Moroccan bathhouse, begin with a dry or hot room to prepare your skin and body, followed by a hot steam room. Enjoy a body scrub and massage followed by a traditional mint tea.

Day 13: Essaouira/Marrakech (B) Drive to Marrakech for a medina tour with a local guide. Opt to visit Djemaa el Fna Square in the evening to see the musicians and street performers that gather there.

In the morning, we continue our journey to Marrakech. Once arriving in the "Red City," join your certified city guide for a tour of the Marrakech medina. Shop to your heart’s content in the souks with their narrow, winding streets as you search out spices, traditional jalabas and slippers, or the famous Moroccan lanterns. Visit the historical Koutoubia Minaret and gardens, the Mellah, and the Saadian Tombs, a complex of sepulchers and mausoleums that house the remains of Saadian Sultan Ahmed Al Mansour Ed Dahb. The tombs were sealed off until their re-discovery in 1917. Tour the grounds of the Bahia Palace, marveling at the intricate decoration, and experience the sights and sounds of the bustling Jemaa el-Fnaa square. Once the tour is finished, you are free to discover the secrets of this amazing, ancient city at your leisure. Once you’ve tired yourself out, relax at one of the tea houses around the square, indulging in the ubiquitous sweet mint tea and watching the hustle and bustle from your shady spot. End the day like a local with an optional group dinner in the famous food stalls of Djemaa el Fna. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 14: Marrakech (B) Enjoy a final free day to explore. Finish up your souvenir shopping or wander the new part of the city for a taste of the modern.

Today is a free day to explore. You may opt to get up early and catch the sunrise over Marrakech by pre-booking the Hot Air Balloon excursion ($225 USD). Another great place to start your day is Djemaa el Fna square, in the heart of the medina. The square changes its offerings throughout the day. In the morning, you can wander past the fresh orange juice stalls, water sellers in colorful costumes with traditional leather water bags, brass cups, and street performers. As the day progresses the snake charmers are replaced by Chleuh dancing-boys, storytellers, magicians, and peddlers of traditional medicines. As the sun sets, the square fills with dozens of food stalls, packed with locals and the entertaining chefs and waiters. Grab a spot on a bench with the other diners and try the Tanjia (slow-cooked lamb), Harira soup, grilled seafood, famous Moroccan couscous, tajine, snails, or even sheep’s head for the truly adventurous. Wash it all down with some spiced tea. See our list below of optional activities for more recommendations about how to spend your free time.

Day 15: Marrakech (B) Depart Marrakech at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Marrakech at any time. If your departure flight is out of Casablanca, affordable transfer options include a 3.5-hour train that runs a few times a day or direct flights from Marrakech to Casablanca. If you wish to extend your stay in Marrakech, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator’s much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted

educator price on any additional tours that you book.