
GEEO ITINERARY

Morocco 6/16/2025 w/ University of Illinois

Day 1: Casablanca (Rabat Day Trip) We recommend arriving the day before as UIUC will organize a day trip to Rabat today. Later, meet your tour leader at your hotel in Casablanca for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

The nearest airport to Casablanca is **Casablanca Mohammed V International Airport (CMN)**. Check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. **Joining Instructions** If you have pre-arranged an arrival transfer, please look for the driver holding a G Adventures sign outside of the airport building of Terminal 1. Approach them and ask them who they are supposed to be picking up (do not tell them your name, they should have this information already). Once they give you the correct name, have your passport ready to show them, and you will be on your way! Alternatively, you can take a taxi from the airport entrance, which will take approximately 1 hour (20 miles), to the hotel. The cost is around 300 Moroccan Dirham. **Arriving the day before!** We recommend arriving in Casablanca the prior day (June 15th) as UIUC has made special arrangements for this program, including covering a night at our start hotel for Sunday, June 15th. For the 15th, consider visiting Casablanca's small medina, beachfront, and notable Art Deco architecture. A must-see is the Hassan II Mosque, open for guided tours from Saturday to Thursday at 09:00, 10:00, 11:00, and 15:00 (check tour times with your hotel, as they may vary, especially during Ramadan). **Rabat Day Tour** UIUC will arrange a special day trip to Rabat for June 16th. Details TBA, but the costs of the tour (other than meals) will be covered by UIUC. **Welcome Meeting:** Your introduction meeting will begin around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. on June 16th in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. This meeting is important as you will meet your tour leader and group and receive important tour information. If you are delayed, please notify us; your tour leader will leave instructions at the front desk regarding where and when to meet the following day. 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. **Accommodation:** Hotel Campanile Casablanca (or similar) * *For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.*

Day 2: Casablanca/Chefchaouen 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 **Note: The route from Tangier to Chefchaouen is curvy in places. If you are susceptible to motion sickness, consider having anti-nausea remedies handy.* **Accommodation:** Hotel Madrid Chefchaouen (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

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

Explore Chefchaouen, a city celebrated for its range of blue hues, set against the dramatic backdrop of the mountains. Spend your day unwinding in a traditional Hammam spa, discovering artisanal crafts sold by local street vendors, or taking share-worthy photos among the beautifully painted alleys and

walkways. You may choose to throw on your tennis shoes and trek up through the scenic Rif Mountains on a guided hike. Head up, up, up for 3-4 hours along lush mountains, passing small waterfalls and streams, stopping for spectacular panoramic views of Chefchaouen. A traditional lunch awaits at a local gîte at the pinnacle of your hike. 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. **Accommodation:** Hotel Madrid Chefchaouen (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 4: Chefchaouen/Fez 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 M'Haya, where we enjoy a traditional lunch that benefits rural Moroccan women and children. This lunch program provides access to education opportunities and healthcare services. The proceeds from this lunch program help support vocational training for rural women, allowing them to support their families and children. Enjoy a traditional home-cooked Moroccan meal and meet some of the women who are part of this program. 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. You have this evening free, making it a convenient time to catch up on laundry. Drop off your clothes at the local laundry service, then head out to explore. 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 Mhaya Village); 45 mins (Mhaya Village to Volubilis); 2 hrs (Volubilis to Fez) **Accommodation:** Hotel Mounia Fes (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 5: Fez 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.

Today, you will go on a guided tour of the Fez medina, the world's largest active medieval medina and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Start your morning by entering through one of the iconic gates into this chaotic area, which spans 1.4 square miles with over 9,000 winding streets. Follow your local guide to explore the artisan quarters, sample local treats, visit the mausoleum, and stop by the Al Qarawiyyin University. You'll also visit Fez's famous leather tannery and have the opportunity to learn about and purchase locally made leather goods. Please note: Only nationally certified local Fez guides are permitted to guide within the medina; your main tour leader will not be able to accompany you in this area. Don't forget to pick up the laundry you dropped off yesterday before enjoying some free time in the afternoon to explore further or relax. **Accommodation:** Hotel Mounia Fes (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 6: Fez/Merzouga 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 **Note: There are some sections of curvy road during today's journey. If you are susceptible to motion sickness, consider having anti-nausea remedies handy.* **Accommodation:** Auberge Dunes D'Or (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 7: Merzouga Explore the sand dunes by foot or opt to take a land cruiser excursion around the dunes. In the late afternoon, enjoy a camel ride to watch the sunset before returning to your hotel.

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 **Accommodation:** Auberge Dunes D'Or (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 8: Merzouga/Todra Gorge 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 **Accommodation:** Hotel Amazir (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 9: Todra Gorge/Aït Ben Haddou 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 **Accommodation:** La Rose du Sable Ait Benhaddou (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day: 10 Aït Ben Haddou/Around Enjoy a hike to the village of Around at the base of the High Atlas Mountains, taking in the stunning views of Mt. Toubkal. Dig into a home-cooked dinner at the gîte where you will stay for the night.

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, we head out on a 1-2 hour hike from Imlil to the little village of Around (Aremd), to arrive 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 quite steep in parts, and is on uneven terrain, so take it at your own pace! Some participants have recommended hiking poles for those with knee issues. Alternatively, you can opt for a taxi ride to the gîte for approximately 50 dirhams. Our accommodation is multi-share with 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 **Note: The road through the mountains is very curvy. If you are susceptible to motion sickness, consider having anti-nausea remedies handy.* **Accommodation:** Auberge Tafraout Armed (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day: 11 Aroumd/Essaouira 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 **Accommodation:** Riad Nakhla Essaouira (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 12: Essaouira 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, your session starts in a warm room to gently prepare your skin and body, transitioning into a steam-filled hot room for deep relaxation. Relish a thorough body scrub and a soothing massage, and conclude your experience with a refreshing mint tea. Please note that men and women have separate areas in the hammam, and the treatment includes a full-body scrub and massage, including the chest, stomach, and head—expect to get your hair wet unless you specifically request otherwise. **Accommodation:** Riad Nakhla Essaouira (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 13: Essaouira/Marrakech 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 you've arrived 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-Fna 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 **Accommodation:** Hotel Oudaya Marrakech (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 14: Marrakech 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. **Accommodation:** Hotel Oudaya Marrakech (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 15: Marrakech Depart Marrakech at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Marrakech at any time. The nearest airport is **Marrakesh Menara Airport (RAK)**. If your departure flight is out of Casablanca, affordable transfer options include a 2.5-hour train that runs frequently throughout the 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. **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Itinerary Disclaimer: While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.*