

Gnawa musicians in the  
Djemaa el Fna, Marrakech



## Morocco – Marrakech and the Sahara

**Morocco** 9 days – October 30-November 7 2010 (ex-Marrakech)

With its red walls, shady palms and maze of packed streets in the souk, Marrakech is a world away, although only three hours by plane. Known as 'Morocco City' by early travellers, Marrakech has been a meeting and market place for nearly a thousand years. At its heart is the market place – the Djemaa el Fna – an open-space with a continuous flow of people, food stalls and in the late afternoon and evenings a bewildering range of acrobats, drummers, dancers, musicians, storytellers and snake-charmers.

On this trip, you'll get to hear the various styles of regional music, meet the musicians and, over the Atlas, get a real taste of desert culture on the edge of the Sahara. As well as the historic monuments of Marrakech, we visit the astonishing mud-brick kasbahs in the Atlas and get an unforgettable first-hand introduction to Morocco's extraordinary musical culture

All Songlines Music Travellers will receive an information sheet about the local music, plus recommended recordings and DVDs.

## Morocco

### Itinerary

**Day 1 Sat** On arrival in Marrakech, we check in and have an introductory chat with our Travel Leader. In the evening you can head for the Djemma el Fna, the vast main square of old Marrakech, where you can get a thrilling first taste of the city's music scene amongst the musicians, jugglers, healers and magicians. We suggest eating near the hotel and afterwards enjoying a musical soiree in which Gnawa musicians and dancers will give an introduction to their bluesy, sub-Saharan musical traditions. These will be intimate performances with explanations of instruments and songs.

**Day 2 Sun** After breakfast, a tour of the old city. Our guide will collect you from the hotel and lead you on foot through the narrow streets. This is essentially an orientation tour to give you some idea of what is where in this fascinating maze of narrow streets. After a break for lunch we will visit an instrument-maker in the old city. Music and traditional crafts come together in Morocco. The remainder of the afternoon is free to wander at will, do some shopping or visit some of the city's spectacular architectural attractions. After dinner there'll be a trip to hear live music in the trendy Gueliz district, after which you can party late at the many clubs in the area.

**Day 3 Mon** Today is at leisure in Marrakech to perhaps visit the Jardin Marjorelles, the famous blue garden. Alternatively your tour leader can arrange a day out to Imlil in the High Atlas. It's the Berbers, not Arabs, who are by far the majority population in southern Morocco. After a walk to the village and a picnic lunch, Berber musicians will be able to give you a taste of their celebratory *ahouach* music with their own string and percussion instruments. The evening is free for you to use as you wish. Our Travel Leader can make dinner suggestions for you and we suggest a return visit to the Djemma el Fna where the music will already start making much more sense than it did two days ago.

**Day 4 Tues** We leave Marrakech after breakfast and take the Tizi n'Tichka pass through the Atlas mountains, winding past tiny Berber villages clinging to the slopes. On the other side we descend to Ouarzazate, the gateway to the desert and Morocco's film capital for desert movies. A walk around town before our evening meal.

**Day 5 Weds** Today our road runs south towards Zagora and as the landscape changes, so does the music. In the afternoon we reach the village of M'hamid at the edge of the Sahara. We spend the night with nomadic 'Blue Men' at their desert camp, sleeping under the stars in bivouacs made from mud and camel wool. The villagers will join us to share their songs and drumming around the campfire showing us some of the music associated with the rituals of camel caravans of days gone by and performing dances such as the 'guedra'.

**Day 6 Thurs** We board our vehicles and continue deep into the desert and to the magnificent dunes of Erg Chegaga. The music here is the gentler 'kasbah' music and features more melodic stringed instruments – guitars, *tidnit* and whatever else the musicians can lay their hands on! We camp in nomad-style tents and there is the opportunity to take a camel ride across the dunes (optional).

**Day 7 Fri** After breakfast we leave our desert camp and head north, retracing our steps to the main road, and in the late afternoon, we reach Ouarzazate once more.

**Day 8 Sat** Today we retrace our steps back over the High Atlas. However there is one last treat in store as we make a detour to the spectacular Kasbahs of Ait Benhaddou and Telouet. The former has frequently been used as a film location, the latter, built by the powerful Glaoui family of Berbers, was the setting for an unusual story at the end of World War II. Rejoining the main road we head back on the plains and into the city of Marrakech.

**Day 9 Sun** After breakfast our tour ends and it is time to continue our travels in Morocco, or to head for the airport and the flight home.

### Pricing details

We have designed these tours to give you the option of taking up an all-inclusive package which includes your air seats, or the option of making your own way there and then meeting up with the rest of your party at the first hotel.

### 9-day tour Oct 30-Nov 7 2010 (ex-Marrakech)

#### Tour price – £895 per person

Price includes:

- 6 nights hotel accommodation and 2 nights in a bivouac tent on bed and breakfast basis
- music events and sightseeing as detailed above
- the services of a Songlines Travel Leader

**Single supplement:** £329 per person.

Flights are available from London, from £209 per person. You can book these yourself or we can book them for you. Transfers from and to the airport in Marrakech are included with flights booked through Songlines Music Travel.

### To reserve your place

Please read the booking conditions on the website and contact the reservations office on:

**+44 (0)20 8505 2582**  
 or email:  
**songlines@thegroupscompany.com**

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The Kasbah at Ait Benhaddou