

Morocco

Women of the Bougmez Valley



This cultural expedition delves deep into the valleys of the Atlas mountains to discover what life is really like for Moroccan women in remote rural communities. The trip starts with the heady sights and sounds of Marrakech, where we will explore the souks and barter for ingredients for our Moroccan cookery class. Then it's off to the beautiful Bougmez Valley to spend eight days living in one of the small villages. Learn about the lives of the local women and, in addition to community project work, we will have the opportunity to shadow the daily work of a family for a few days - taking part in everyday activities in and around the home and village. We also head to one of Morocco's most beautiful waterfalls before finishing our adventure in Essaouira, an historic and beautiful port on the Atlantic coast. Here we get to ride camels and have a surf lesson in one of the world's top surfing locations. This unique adventure is sure to be an eye opening and highly educational experience.



Recommended itinerary

Culture shock rating: 

Day 1: Fly from UK to Marrakech, walk around Djenna el Fna

Physical rating: 

Fly from the UK to Marrakech and transfer to our hotel. Depending on the time of the flight we will have a late afternoon walk into the markets where we can start to acclimatise and see that although only a three hour flight from the UK, Marrakech is a gateway to a completely different world.

Day 2: Marrakech walking tour, Women's talk, Cooking class

This morning, we head out on a walking tour of old Marrakech. The winding alleys and intricate palaces make for a heady combination of vibrant street scenes and quiet oases in the midst of a bustling city. After lunch, we have an informal presentation and discussion with two women who work with our partners in Marrakech. In the late afternoon, we'll head out and visit the souq to barter and shop for the fresh produce to make our dinner. Discover the array of meat, vegetables, herbs and spices that form the basis of Moroccan cuisine. During our hands-on cookery class, the chef will teach us how to make traditional dishes that are central to Moroccan cuisine. It's worth paying attention as we eat what we cook!

Day 3: Transfer to Bougmez Valley

We say goodbye to Marrakech for now, and drive to the Bougmez Valley. This quiet valley feels a little like a hidden Himalayan Kingdom dropped into the heart of the Atlas Mountains. A year round road link was only established in 2001, previous to which it was cut off for four months of the year by snow. The valley is home to a number of villages, where many of our Moroccan partner's guides and cooks come from. After lunch we can visit the project locations and have a gentle walk around the village, familiarising ourselves with our home for the next eight days.

Day 4-12: Bougmez Valley project work and family life

These days are set aside as a mix of project working days and shadowing local families. Throughout the week, there will be an opportunity for those that want to undertake a few easy day walks around the valley and surrounding areas. There will also be chance to join in with the women's association and make local handicrafts, an opportunity to discover new skills and find out more about life for women in rural Morocco. Project work: The exact nature of the project the group will undertake in the village will depend on what help the local community needs at the time of our visit.

The Village Association will meet to discuss the needs of the community and put forward suggestions of work they would like to be done. It is likely that we won't have the exact details of the project we will be working on until nearer the time of our visit. Previous groups have built incinerators, repaired footbridges and paths, planted cacti on the hill sides to prevent soil erosion and laid water pipes and drainage ditches. Whatever you end up doing, these days spent among the villages in the company of local families will be an undoubted highlight of our time in Morocco.

Day in the life of Bougmez Women:

In addition to the project work, we also hope to be involved with all aspects of family life in the village. On a number of days during the week, students spend time with local families and shadow mothers and children going about their daily activities. This could mean helping to cook or prepare food, tending the fields, helping with clothes washing or making jewellery products to sell at local markets. In July, locals will also be harvesting barley and alfalfa in addition to the usual daily duties.

Day 13: Cascades d'Ouzoud and Imi n Ifri Natural Bridge

Today we say goodbye to our new found friends and head towards Azilal to visit the Ouzoud Falls – Morocco's most impressive waterfalls. The three-tiered falls drop 110m into the river below and a series of paths mean we can follow the falls down into the gorge. Later we continue our journey and visit the natural stone bridge of Imi n Ifri.

Day 14-16: Essaouira, Walking tour, Camel ride on beach, Surf lesson

We drive to the UNESCO city of Essaouira, one of Morocco's most attractive coastal cities. The wild waves of the Atlantic crash remorselessly onto the rocky coastline of this old pirate's hideout. Portuguese, Berber and French battlements encircle the maze of narrow lanes with tiny cafes looking out onto small squares. Two fortresses look out over the ocean and on an offshore island stands another even larger castle. Once we've settled into our hotel, there will be an opportunity to go on a walking tour around the old town and possibly sample freshly caught and cooked fish in the old port. The next few days are an opportunity to relax in this beautiful place. We take a short drive south to the village of Sidi Kaouki. Here, we meet our camels and ride along the beach. We'll have a picnic lunch before returning to Essaouira for some free time in the afternoon to explore the markets and city ramparts. Whilst in this fantastic town, we also have time to head to the beautiful expanse of Essaouira's 10km beach for a surf lesson from a renowned local surf school. Full equipment and instructions will be given by approved instructors.

Day 17-18: Visit to Argan cooperative, Marrakech, home.

After a morning of relaxing on the beach or shopping in the markets, we will begin our return to Marrakech. Along the way, we pay a visit to an Argan Oil Co-operative and see how this world-famous oil is produced. Back in Marrakech, we celebrate our expedition with our last evening meal and another chance to soak up the amazing atmosphere of the Jenna el Fna square. After a final morning in the souk and watching the hustle and bustle of this magical city we can enjoy a lunch in the main square, before departing for the airport and our return flight to the UK.

Important information: It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes or natural events, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides.



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