

DISCOVER THE WONDERS
SPIEKERMANN
TRAVEL  SERVICE



**MOROCCO AND THE
WESTERN SAHARA**

THE LAND OF THE DESERT

November 3 - 14, 2022

Led by Lecturer, Guide and Historian, Mohamed Halouani

Few places on earth compare to the Sahara Desert, a natural wonder of vast plains and heated dunes that controls the south and eastern regions of Morocco. The Western Sahara is a territory of northwestern Africa bordered by Morocco to the north, Algeria in the northeast, Mauritania to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. This 12-day program takes you on a journey to discover some of the most unknown parts of the Sahara, forbidden for decades to foreigners. We are proud to be the "first ones" to bring intrepid travelers to the vast, rocky and sandy regions of Saguia El Hamra, Tiris Zemmour, and Rio de Oro, now Saharan provinces of Morocco. A real "off the beaten tracks" expedition for passionate travelers and Sahara lovers that combines real adventure with refined cultural encounters. Accompanied by reliable guides and following a carefully planned itinerary, you will safely explore these vast lands. Crossing the desert, you'll experience genuine encounters with nomadic tribes, explore stone citadels and prehistoric rock art sites, and navigate along emerald lagoons that divide ocean and dunes. This itinerary is the result of ten years' research, both bibliographical and in the field; through scouting, contacts with nomads, local tribes, and former fighters, allowing us to share with our travelers the most interesting places of this large region full of history, linking prehistoric times with a contemporary era.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director, Spiekermann Travel

Thursday, November 3 Arrive in Agadir (MOROCCO)



Arrive in **Agadir**, a city on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean in the southern part of Morocco, meet and transfer to **Sofitel Agadir (or similar)** for check-in and overnight.

Note: Flights usually arrive from Casablanca.

Friday, November 4 Agadir - Sidi Ifni (Hispano - Moresque Citadel)



Agadir is a Berber and cosmopolitan town with Phoenician origins. Since 1140 BC it has been inhabited by the Carthaginians, Portuguese, Dutch, Sephardi Jews, and finally, by the French due in part to its geographical position - a large beach protected by a gulf and a mild climate. The town was destroyed by two earthquakes in 1731 and 1960 but has always been rebuilt. Explore the **Market of Agadir**, surrounded by decorated walls, and **Souk El Had**, one of the largest in Morocco with more than 6,000 merchants offering nearly any product and handicraft. The traders are not pushy, making the visit even more enjoyable. Our small convoy of 4x4 vehicles will leave the main highway for more scenic views along the Atlantic coast between reefs and creeks. Enjoy a late lunch at a typical restaurant in a fisherman village facing the ocean. Continue on to **Sidi Ifni**, a former Spanish enclave that dates back to 1476. The still inhabited **Hispano-Moresque Citadel** dominates the ocean from a rocky hill - its large alleys and round plaza has a unique "back in time" atmosphere. Check-in to the lovely **Safa Hotel (or similar)** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 5 Sidi Ifni - Tifnidilt (Camel Market)



Today you will set out for **Guelmim**, an ancient caravan terminal. At the **medina**, you will discover goods and ancient glass beads from the trans-Sahara trade. The right day to be in Guelmim is on market day and the animal section of the souk - with herds of sheep, goats, and camel - is a unique scene of colors, sounds, and smells. Nomadic shepherds dressed in traditional djellabas with their head and face covered by blue turbans; arrive as far away as the Mauritanian desert. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, and then leave the road for a track to **Fort Tifnidilt**, located at the top of a hill overlooking the western bank of **Ouadi Draa** riverbed. This southern area, along with the estuary of Ouadi Draa, was the border between the French protectorate of Morocco and the Spanish Sahara colony. The ghostly military fort of Tifnidilt still "guards" this ancient border. Being there will make you feel as if you were on the set of an old French Foreign Legion movie. Ex-

pect a late afternoon arrival at the charming and comfortable **Ksar Tafnidilt Hotel (or similar)** built using local materials styled in perfect Saharan architecture. Our dear friends, a French couple, Guy and Magali, manage the hotel. Magali is a desert expert and she even won the "Rally des Gazelles", the most grueling off-road competition reserved for female teams. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, November 6 Tifnidilt (Estuaries & Desert)



The **Dra Estuary** region is visited only by brave travelers, and between the cliffs and the Atlantic Ocean, there are only tracks vanishing in the sand. You will discover tiny temporary **settlements of fishermen**, fishing directly from the cliff or from caves facing the ocean. Ghostly colonial **military posts**, towering sand dunes, and camels, are part of the landscape. If the tide permits, you will drive for miles along a wild beach on a strip between wedged between dunes and waves. You will leave the coastline and travel along a riverbed (**Ouadi**) in a large canyon, the only possible path between desert, cliffs, and the ocean. In the evening, you will return to the **Ksar Tafnidilt Hotel (or similar)** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, November 7 Tifnidilt - (WESTERN SAHARA)



After breakfast, you will leave Tifnidilt, crossing a steep range of dunes along a crag situated between desert and sea. From this point, you will be in the territories known as the **Western Sahara**, a disputed territory as well as one of the most sparsely populated territories in the world. The **Naila Salt Lagoon**, the largest salt lake in Morocco (62 miles), has an estuary opening to the Atlantic Ocean. A protected area of great natural beauty, it is an important resting point for migrating birds including flamingos, cormorants, gulls, heron, etc. You will explore these emerald waters surrounded by yellow dunes and brown escarpments by local fisherman's boat. You will camp at a spectacular shore between dunes and lagoon, with comfortable tents equipped with beds and carpets, a cook, table, chairs, and restaurant-tent. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, November 8 Western Sahara (Smara, Desert & Citadel)



The boat will take you back to shore where you will hop into your 4x4 vehicle for the drive through the rocky desert region of **Seguia el Hamra to Smara**. Sheikh Maa el Ainin, born to an important Sufi religious family, founded this town in 1898. Before the edification of the town, the site was a caravanserai on the

path to Mauritania. The town became a key market for the local nomads and the caravans linking the Maghreb with sub-Saharan Africa. Smara has managed to hold on to its rich historical heritage and today, it is a charming small town with a well-supplied market and the remains of a Hispano-Moresque colonial military quarter. There is also an interesting palace, built of stone with a white plaster bas-relief ceiling. Tonight you will be a guest to a traditional feast and women drumming, typical of the Saharawi culture. Dinner and overnight will be at a full, comfortable fixed camp in Moorish large tents with carpets and beds, or at the recently built *Hotel Sahariano*. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday-Friday, November 9-11
Sahara Desert (The Forbidden Track)



In Smara, you will meet the local guide, a nomad from a Saharawi tribe, who will lead you on a four-day road desert expedition, crossing the Western Sahara from north to south. In this real Saharan expedition, you will navigate large dunes to discover wells frequented by long lines of camels belonging to the legendary Reguibat nomads. The Reguibat are descendants of Sidi Ahmed Rguibi who lived in this region during the 16th century. Through him, they believe they are of the chorfra tribe (descendants of Muhammad.) One of the highlights of this journey is the opportunity to meet them and learn more about their lives. You will also have the privilege to visit an area rich in ancient petroglyphs just recently discovered. Archaeologists believe that these sites hide the highest concentration of prehistoric graffiti in North Africa. Overnights will be more basic *bush camps*, but this is a great way to add to the adventure. Camp under the stars in comfortable tents with beds and carpets and a restaurant-tent with tables and chairs. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 12
Sahara Desert – Dakhla (Desert to Ocean)



The expedition continues by following a road that does not exist on the maps in the direction of the ocean to **Dakhla**. The exceptional beauty of the landscape makes the Dakhla Peninsula a very special place. Arrive at the small town of Dakhla founded by Spanish navigators in 1502 as "Villa Cisneros" sometime in the afternoon. Dinner and overnight will be at the *Hotel Sahariano (or similar)* **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, November 13
Rio De Oro



After breakfast, spend some time exploring the Rio de Oro, a 25-mile-long sea loch situated between cliffs and dunes. Different pastel colors paint the scenery - Blue Ocean, yellow sand, green seaweed fields, dark rocks, etc. Drive along the shore where the waves overlap the sand dunes and visit the colorful fishing harbor. Enjoy lunch in an oyster farm, located directly on the lagoon where you can taste fresh oysters just removed from the water, or opt for a delicious seafood tajine or baked fish with fresh local vegetables. Return to the *Hotel in Dakhla* for your last night in the Western Sahara. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, November 14
Dakhla – USA



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight back home. **(B)**

Note: Flights out usually stop in Casablanca before continuing on into Europe and back to the USA.

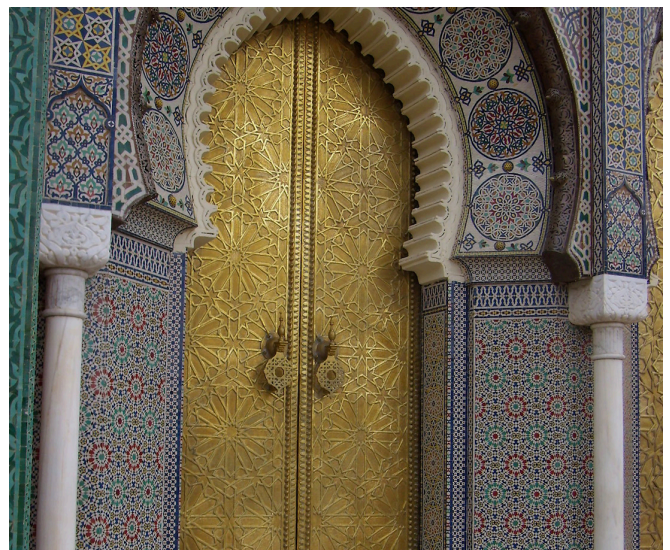
"We reserve the right to change the order of activities Or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts such as weather conditions, or in order to allow the itinerary run smoothly."

Special Trip Remarks:

Tourist facilities are very limited in the remote regions of the desert and small villages you will be visiting. There are few first-class hotels outside the cities. Hotel air-conditioning in this region does not cool a room to American standards of comfort. In the heart of the desert, there are no standard accommodations and you will be camping. However, we will do our best to ensure your comfort. Tents will be equipped with beds, carpets, and a separate dining tent and seated tented toilet.

Participants should understand that this trip involves long drives in hot weather traveling over virgin sand dunes in 4x4 vehicles. The physical shape you are in will be an important factor in your enjoyment of your trip. There are dangers inherent in any expedition traveling to remote regions, such as sickness and lack of modern medical facilities. If you have any chronic health problems (respiratory or cardiac problems, a bad back, or diabetes), we recommend you consider a different trip. It is highly advisable to purchase travel protection insurance for such a journey. In addition, many routes are sand and this can cause breathing and eye irritation from the dust. By signing up for such tour, you are admitting to accepting these challenges and that you are agreeing to be tolerant, flexible and patient with any possible arising inefficiency.

Knowing the nature of such off-the-beaten track journey, all travelers joining this tour will require a high level of flexibility and tolerance and willingness to go with the flow when things change. Anyone joining this trip are acknowledging their full understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions are admitting that they are in good physical and mental health, and are equipped with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope up with the tour. We retain the full right to make any necessary changes to the itinerary, to the sequence of visits, to the choices of hotels and sites or activities previously described in the itinerary.



Tour cost (land only): \$5,995.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$595.00

Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 10 participants

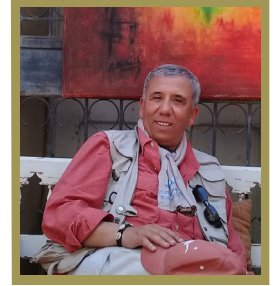
Note: Mohamed Halouani will lead tour for a minimum of 6 people; less than 6 will be led by local guides

Trip Grade: II

Lodging Level: * ****



Your lecturer and guide, Mr. Mohamed Halouani ... is a Tunisian native who transformed his profound passion for travel and history into a creative and diversified educational career, designing and carrying out multiple archaeological and cultural trips for institutions such as The Detroit Institute of Art, the Textile Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, Cross Cultural Adventurers and many more organizations. After having received his degrees in English and Spanish, Mr. Halouani completed his European Master's in linguistics and Hispanic studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris. He has extensive knowledge on Islamic architecture and Eastern decorative elements, as well as Roman archaeology and history. A skilled multilingual interpreter, Mohamed has served as the head tour guide in Tunisia. He now resides in Paris and leads only certain select small groups to the countries in North Africa.



Tour includes:

- Arrival and departure transfers.
- AC transportation throughout the tour.
- Accommodation in double room as mentioned in the program in basic mobile camps, standard 4 & 5* hotels and authentic Moorish Riads with breakfast.
- Professional English-speaking guide throughout the tour.
- Meals at local restaurants or picnic lunches as specified in the itinerary.
- All activities described in the tour and entrance fees to all sites mentioned unless listed as optional.
- Bottled water while on drives.
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and porters

Tour does not include:

- International air USA - Agadir /Dakhla – USA (**flights usually stop in Casablanca.**)
- Moroccan Visa (currently not required for US Citizens.)
- Any PCR tests required pre arrival and pre departure.
- Drinks during meals (soft or alcohol) or meals not mentioned.
- Gratuities to Tour Leader.
- Items of a personal nature (camera or video fees, laundry, phone calls, emails, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on scheduled dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or early arrival.
- Travel protection insurance. **(HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)**

Trip Grade:

III Challenging - parts of the trip will be physically challenging, involving walking over sand in a hot climate and presence of insects. There will be long drives over rough roads and sand dunes with no defined roads. You will be camping and sleeping on cots with a thin mattress. Lunches may be simple, cold picnic lunches. Expect primitive or no bathroom facilities along the road and remoteness from modern towns or cities.

Lodging Level:

-* Basic-Deluxe** - basic camping (individual tents with shared shower-tent and toilet-tent) to hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards (3 to 5 stars.)

