



RIDE WORLD WIDE

MOROCCO

AUBERGE & GUESTHOUSE RIDES 2023

RIDE INFORMATION

Only a short flight from the UK but with a real feeling of the exotic and sun for most of the year, Morocco is a great destination for the avid traveller. These rides are run by Sports Travel Morocco, a French company based near Marrakech, and are aimed at confident and independent riders who prefer a fairly comfortable and relaxed holiday (for more adventurous, endurance style camping rides please see our Morocco Camping Adventure Ride information). Itineraries explore distinct areas, including the foothills of the high Atlas, the Atlantic Coast and the northern edge of the Sahara Desert. Routes are progressive, riding to a new location each day, with nights spent in local guesthouses and hotels. Another option is to stay at the comfortable base close to Marrakech where riding is just one of the activities on offer (please enquire for information about Terres d'Amanar).



DATES

Set date 7 night progressive itineraries can run pretty much year round - Desert rides during autumn, winter and early spring, beach and mountain rides in the summer. Please see the set departure dates overleaf for the Sand Hills of Merzouga - other itineraries can be arranged on request for groups (usually of 4 to 10 riders) - please contact Ride World Wide to discuss.

HORSES

The horses used are mostly pure and cross-bred Berber Arabs of between about 14.2hh and 16hh. They are working desert horses owned by Sports Travel Morocco, who have about 30 horses in all, mainly stallions, with some geldings, split between their stables at Skoura, near Ouarzazate & Terres d'Amanar near Marrakech. The horses are strong, sure-footed and with excellent stamina. They are responsive and forward going to ride and there is a good selection for riders of intermediate ability and above. Stallions are often noisy and need to be treated with a little extra care and attention at least on the first day, keeping them a sensible distance apart. However if you are sensitive to these needs you will find them responsive to ride and easy to control. The horses are often moved by truck from the stables to the start point of the different rides and you do not always visit the stables.

TACK

English style, good quality leather saddles and bridles (dry desert environment can cause stitching to deteriorate quite quickly so don't expect new condition). Most horses are ridden in snaffle bits. Saddle-bags are provided for personal belongings when riding.



RIDING

These rides are aimed at fit, confident riders with a sense of adventure. Most itineraries are fairly strenuous and particularly on the rides in the desert and along the Atlantic coast, there are opportunities for long, fast canters. The amount of riding varies with individual itineraries but on average there is about 6 hours in the saddle each day, broken up with a rest for lunch and a siesta. Daily itineraries also vary depending on the time of year - if it is hot you may be woken early to ride, stopping for a long lunch and siesta in the shade during the heat of the day and riding again when the temperature drops. When it is cooler, you will ride for longer during the middle of the day. Rides are led by an English speaking Moroccan guide and a back-up rider also accompanies each group. Sports Travel have several guides, all experienced, and they tend to stick to their own area. The guides carry a mobile 'phone for emergencies when riding. Rides are usually arranged for a minimum of 4 and maximum of 10 guests.

WEIGHT LIMIT

95kg (15 stone) - please contact us if you are close to this to ensure a suitable horse is available.



PACE

The pace on the rides is moderate overall, with good opportunities for long canters each day on most itineraries. Where the going is good, you often canter for a couple of miles. In some places there are times when the going is rocky, rough or stony and the horses have to walk and / or be led for some distance. Each ride is a little different but you generally cover about 30km a day.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

Although you don't have to be an expert over jumps or in competition to join these rides, you should be a fit, confident rider who is relaxed, secure and in control on a horse at all paces (including long trots and canters) when riding in open country. You should also be used to riding over varied, uneven or rocky terrain and confident if ground becomes rough or difficult. General fitness is also very important to cope with harsh and changing desert conditions (from hot midday sun to cold nights) and with the several occasions on each ride when you will need to get off and on, unassisted, and to lead your horse over stretches of rough, rock-covered, ground. You also need to be prepared to help look after your horse and, although help is nearly always available, should be confident of tacking-up and un-tacking a horse unassisted and of handling it comfortably from the ground. Grooms are on hand to help you if needed when you arrive at a lunch stop or at your evenings accommodation. If you do not ride regularly at home you will certainly need to accustom yourself to long hours in the saddle.

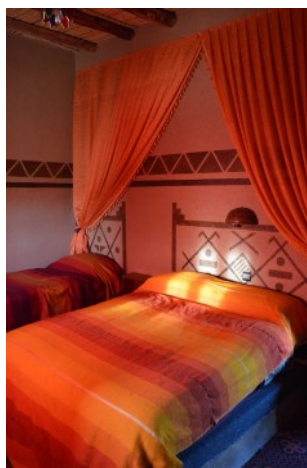
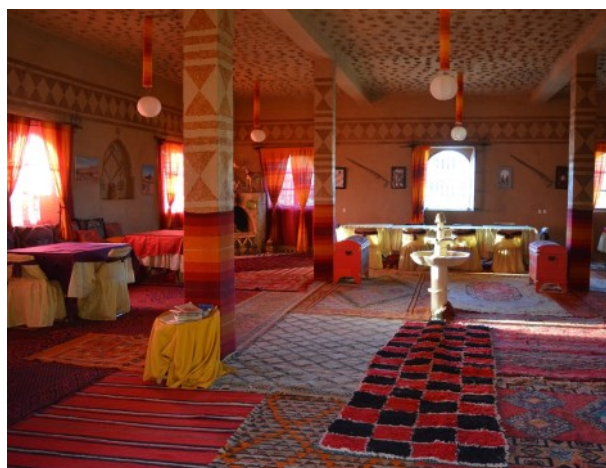
TERRAIN

Morocco offers a huge variety of landscapes. Olive groves and green fields of wheat in the north, pine forests in the foothills of the Atlas, flat topped mountains and extinct volcanoes of the Anti-Atlas, the Atlantic Coast and of course the sand dunes of the Sahara desert in the far south. In the desert there are oases of date palms and characteristic mud villages dominated by Kasbahs with tall towers and thick sandstone walls. In the mountains, Berber villages are linked by narrow winding shepherd tracks that are often rough and stony. Sandy tracks through the hills, open desert plains and the white Atlantic beaches provide excellent chances for faster riding.



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is in a combination of hotels and guesthouses. All accommodation is reasonably comfortable although each night is different and the facilities offered do vary quite considerably. Many of the desert guesthouses are quite isolated and are typically Moroccan, with simple rooms surrounding a courtyard and one main dining area. Hotels are generally about 2* to 3*, all bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms (usually with a shower rather than bath) and some hotels have a swimming pool. Luggage will be transported by back up vehicle. Rates assume twin (or occasionally triple) bedded rooms but singles can usually be organised by prior request for a supplement.



MEALS

The French influence in Morocco ensures a good and varied menu and meals are a simple mixture of local and European food. Breakfast is generally just fresh bread or pancakes, butter and jam, perhaps boiled eggs, yoghurt or fruit, coffee with hot milk or tea. Lunch is usually a picnic brought by the back up team in the vehicle. Folding tables and stools are set up in a shady spot and there may be a big plate of rice, pasta or potatoes with tuna, olives, sweetcorn, carrots etc served with flat bread. When it is not possible to meet the back-up, a simpler picnic may be carried in saddlebags. Dinner is usually at your hotel or guesthouse and generally starts with a soup or sometimes an entree, eg a plate of mixed vegetables and rice, followed by a local dish such as Moroccan chicken, lamb with prunes, aubergine with tomatoes and mince, tajines or couscous. Melons, grapes, pomegranates or some other seasonal fruit will usually round off any meal. Mint tea is a great favourite in Morocco (generally drunk sweet!) and will be offered to you when you arrive in camp after riding and at lunch. Although Morocco is a Muslim country, it is fairly relaxed and wine and beer are available to purchase - however you will need to bring your own as most of the smaller hotels (once you are away from the cities) do not have a licence to sell alcohol. You can purchase bottles of wine or spirits in duty free, or at supermarkets in main Moroccan cities, and they can travel with your luggage in the back up vehicle. Soft drinks can usually be purchased at hotels or guesthouses.



WEATHER

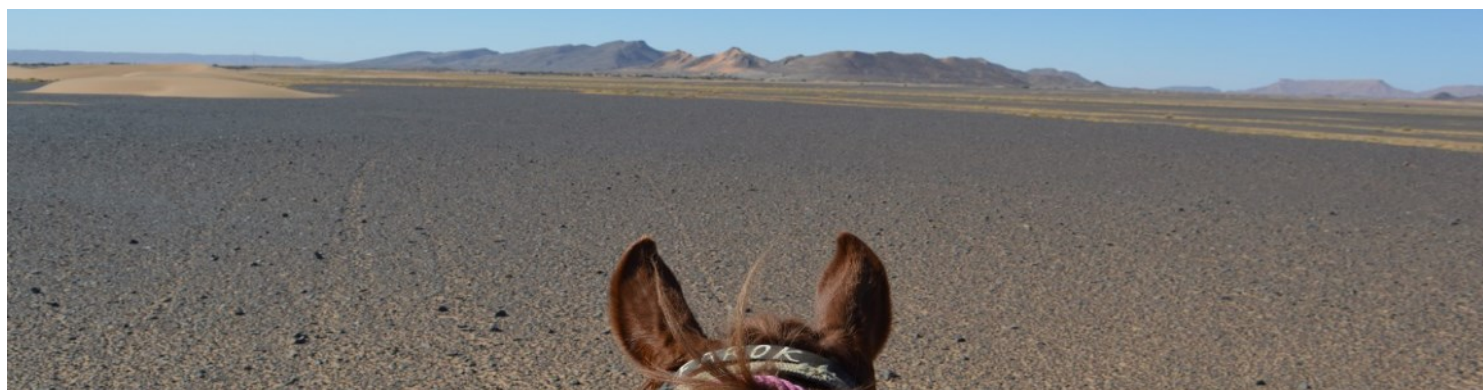
The geological variety of Morocco also means a wide range of climatic conditions - but it does offer year round sun. The coastal regions are generally mild, with average temperatures from 12 degrees C in winter to 25 degrees C in summer (though day time temperatures can easily exceed this). The interior, particularly the south, can be stiflingly hot in the summer, particularly when the hot and dry Sirocco winds blow from the desert. The rainy season is usually November to January - even during these months there is little rain in the southern desert areas although in the hills and mountains rain is possible year round. Mean monthly temperatures in °C for Agadir, Ouarzazate and Marrakech are:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Agadir	14	14	16	17	18	21	22	22	22	20	18	16
Ouarzazate	9	12	14	17	21	25	29	29	26	20	14	9
Marrakech	12	14	17	18	22	25	29	29	25	21	16	14

These are an indications based on 30 year averages - bear in mind that daytime temperatures will be higher and night time temperatures lower. It is also worth noting that temperature differences in the desert can be dramatic - it can be very hot during the day but almost freezing at night!

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.



ITINERARIES

These are summaries of the different itineraries offered. For all the rides you need to be both riding fit and physically fit, happy to cope with your own horse and to mount / dismount unaided in uneven terrain.

Sand Hills of Merzouga Ride This itinerary starts with a night in Ouarzazate. From here you are driven to meet the horses near Tafraout, and the ride follows a progressive route, heading north east, at times close to the Algerian border, finally ending at the great sand dunes at Merzouga. The first and last nights are at the comfortable Hotel Le Fint in Ouarzazate, other nights are in more simple guesthouses in the desert. There is usually about 5 to 6 hours riding a day and the ride takes you deep into the desert, passing typical Moroccan villages, oases of date palms, dramatic dry mountain ranges, and sand dunes of Ouzina and Merzouga. Here you say goodbye to the horses and drive back to Ouarzazate for the final night.



Essaouira & Atlantic Coast Ride The meeting point for this ride is Marrakech and the first night is usually spent here (if everyone arrives early you may stay in Essaouira). On the second day you drive to Diabat, close to Essaouira, where you meet the horses. The ride follows the Atlantic coast, heading south following tracks through cedar and argan forests, along cliff tops and over sand dunes, and across deserted beaches. About 4 to 5 hours riding each day with good opportunities for long canters. The ride ends close to Timezguida Oufas (the mosque of the beach) and from here you drive back to Essaouira for the night, transferring to Marrakech the next morning.

Mountains & Plateaux of Marrakech The meeting point for this ride is Marrakech and the first night is usually spent at Terre d'Amanar, which is the base for the horses and only 40 minutes drive from Marrakech. From here you set off riding in to the foothills of the Atlas mountains, following tracks through the pine forests, across open plateau, over high passes and through picturesque mountain villages. There is 4 to 5 hours riding each day, with opportunities for canters on the forest tracks, but quite a lot of slower work too as you climb into the



ITINERARIES cont.

The following is an example of the **Sand Hills of Merzouga Ride** day by day itinerary - please enquire for other itineraries and please note that itineraries are only examples and daily timetables and routes ridden may vary, depending on the weather and other local conditions. This is left to the discretion and experience of your guide.

Day 1 - [Own arrangements to arrive Ourzazate airport - flights are either via Casablanca or you can fly to Marrakech and travel overland). In the evening meet your guide and other riders at the Hotel Le Fint (or similar) for dinner and the night. (D)

Day 2 - Breakfast and set off early in the morning driving toward Zagora and then turning east at the town of Tansikht. From here continue driving, stopping for lunch in a local restaurant, and then the last 60km on dirt roads. Here the horses will be waiting and, after a cup of mint tea, you will be allocated your mount. A chance to try your horse in the ring before setting off across dunes and sandy river beds. After about 2 ½ hours you arrive at a comfortable guesthouse near the village of Taфраoute. Untack the horses and after tying them up and watering them there will be time for a quick shower. Dinner and night at the guesthouse. (B,L,D)



Day 3 - Breakfast and then tack up the horses and set off riding, firstly through Taфраoute village and then across the plateau of Ahbouche Ktbouyte, ideal terrain for a good canter. At midday you meet the back-up vehicle and stop for a picnic lunch in the shade of an acacia tree. Time for a siesta before saddling up again and following a route which takes you into a broad valley, between the mountains of Djbel Mohre to the right & Djbel Zireg to the left. You can admire the breathtaking landscapes of the Sahara desert; endless dunes with majestic cliffs in the background. In the late afternoon you arrive at a charming little desert lodge located in Mharech valley. Dinner and night at the desert lodge (4 to 6 hours riding) (B,L,D)

Day 4 - Today's ride continues east, crossing a small pass and then dropping down into Wad Griss. Immerse yourself into the desert scenery, dry austere mountains of black rock, red pinnacles, table tops, and golden dunes - a truly grandiose landscape. After stopping in a small stand of thorn trees for lunch, you set off again, crossing a wonderful stretch of packed sand which provides the chance for a long gallop. The Algerian border is only 5km to the south now and you turn north east to the sand hills of Ouzina. The night is spent in a comfortable inn on the edge of the dunes. (5 to 6 hours riding) (B,L,D)



Day 5 - Breakfast and then tack-up and set off riding, firstly through the splendid dunes and then following tracks into the rocky hills. Water the horses at a small well just outside a remote village, small, simple houses with the remains of a Kasbah, the red mud constructed fortresses typical of southern Morocco, close by. Stop for a picnic and then in the afternoon continue across open plains to the village of Taghaoucht-n-Jdaïd. The night is spent in a lodge close by (4 to 5 hours riding) (B,L,D)

ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - After tacking up the horses, set off again. The scenery changes today and you cross dry river beds dotted with tamarisk. Ride through rolling dunes and tussock grass before stopping below a rocky outcrop in the shade of a single thorn tree for lunch. You might walk a short way up the hill to see Neolithic carvings made in the rocks of antelope, mountain goats and snakes. In the late afternoon start riding again heading northwards. In the far distance you may spot the high dunes of Merzouga growing closer and closer as the afternoon progresses. The night is spent in a comfortable Riad close to the base of the dunes (about 5 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 7 - Breakfast in the Riad and your last mornings ride through the beautiful Chebbi Erg dunes, some of the highest in Morocco. The sand changes colour with the light, from deep orange, to gold, then silver. After a couple of hours riding through the sand you meet the back-up lorry and here you say good bye to the horses. Board the mini-bus and set off driving in the direction of Erfoud, Boumalne Dades, across the 1000 Kasbah Valley to reach Ouarzazate. Check-in to your hotel with the rest of the afternoon to relax by the pool or explore the town. A farewell dinner with your guide at a local restaurant. Night at the hotel in Ouarzazate (about 2 hours riding and 5 hours drive). (B,L,D)



Day 8 - Breakfast in the hotel and transfer to Ouarzazate airport for onward travel / flight home. (B)

DATES & PRICES 2023

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are quoted in Euros. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the euro/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay. Prices assume a minimum of 4 riders but rides can be arranged on request for 2 or more riders (please enquire for small group supplements).

Sand Hills of Merzouga (7 nights) - 1520 Euros per person (single supplement 220 Euros)

1st to 8th January	26th March to 2nd April*	19th to 26th November
8th to 15th January	2nd to 9th April*	3rd to 10th December
26th February to 5th March	9th to 16th April*	10th to 17th December
5th to 12th March	22nd to 29th October*	24th to 31st December
12th to 19th March	29th October to 5th November*	31st December to 7th January 2024
19th to 26th March	12th to 19th November	

***high season supplement 50 euros**

Essaouira & Atlantic Coast Ride (7 nights) - 1600 Euros per person (single supplement 280 Euros)

Dates on request for groups between April and September, above price assumes 4 or more

Mountains & Plateaux of Marrakech (7 nights) - Prices & dates on request during summer months for 2 or more riders

Rates **INCLUDE** 7 nights shared accommodation, all riding, meals (as per the individual itinerary) and equipment, transfers from a set meeting / drop off point (as indicated in the individual itinerary) and the services of an English speaking guide.

Rates **DO NOT** include international flights to Morocco and taxes, any extra nights accommodation before / after the ride itinerary, your bar bill during the ride and at hotels, personal travel / medical insurance (which you must have), any visa fees, personal items at hotels (eg laundry, telephone calls etc) nor any tips you might wish to leave staff.

Single supplement - No supplement is charged for single travellers who are happy to share a room (usually with one, occasionally two other riders). If you would like to guarantee a single room then the supplement will be charged. (NB some hotels have a limited number of rooms and if the ride is quite full then a single room may not be possible, or possible only on some nights).



FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point for the **Sand Hills of Merzouga** is Ouarzazate airport.

For **Essaouira & Atlantic Coast Ride** and **Mountains & Plateaux of Marrakech** the meeting point is Marrakech airport. (overland transfers from / to Marrakech can be arranged for an extra charge).

Royal Air Maroc fly daily to Casablanca from London and have onward connecting flights to Ouarzazate and Marrakech.

Both British Airways and Easy Jet fly from Gatwick to Marrakech daily.

There is a good train service in Morocco (www.oncf.ma) and there is a station at Casablanca airport with mainline connections to Marrakech. You can also travel by train all the way from the UK (see- www.seat61.com)

There are also good modern bus services run by CTM <http://www.ctm.ma/en> and Supratours <http://www.supratours.ma/en/> between Marrakech and Ouarzazate.

GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

Visas If you hold a full British Passport, currently a visa is not required to visit Morocco.

Health No vaccinations are required as a condition of entry to Morocco although The Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommends that you ensure you are up to date with routine vaccinations in accordance with the recommended UK schedule as well as Hepatitis A and Tetanus. If you are not up to date with these you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure.

(DRAFT 24/09/2022)

