

# Discover the rich Jewish History of Morocco!



© ALLNUMIS.COM

**A 12 day Jewish Heritage journey throughout Morocco.  
February 26th – March 9th, 2023**

## JEWISH HERITAGE TOUR OF MOROCCO

### Sunday, February 26th: Casablanca

Departure towards Morocco. Overnight on board.

### Monday, February 27th: Casablanca

Arrival at Casablanca airport throughout the morning. Pick up and transfer to the city. Casablanca is the financial capital of Morocco and the largest city in the Maghreb. As a curiosity, the city hosted the Anfa Conference (also called the Casablanca Conference) in



January 1943, where Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt discussed the progress of the war. Our first stop will be the famous Hassan II Mosque, inaugurated in 1993. The building was commissioned

by King Hassan II to be the most ambitious structure ever built in Morocco. All the granite and other materials used in the construction, were extracted from around Morocco, except for some white granite and 56 glass chandeliers. At 210 metres (690 ft) in height, the minaret is the tallest religious structure in the world). After lunch, we will be ready to check in at the hotel. Later in the afternoon, you will

have free time to pay a visit to the *shouk* inside the Medina (old city) of Casablanca which is made up of an endless number of streets dotted with colorful shops that neatly display their handmade products before your eyes.

If you decide to take it slowly, you can easily spend up a few hours browsing



among carpets, paintings and handicrafts of all types and conditions. If the starting prices are too expensive for you, don't hesitate to try to get them lower, since bargaining is not considered an offense. Welcome dinner and overnight in Casablanca.

## Tuesday, February 28th: Casablanca

Today, we will visit the museum of Moroccan Judaism, the only Jewish Museum in the Arab world. The building, situated in the Oasis neighborhood of Casablanca, covers 700 square meters and



consists of a large multipurpose room and three exhibition rooms. The multipurpose room presents paintings, photographs, and sculptures of Jewish life in Morocco. The exhibition rooms contain ritual objects, historic documents, costumes and jewelry from

religious and family life, in addition to reconstructions of Moroccan synagogues. Nowadays, most of the Jews of Morocco live in Casablanca where they have a well-organized setup comprised kosher restaurants, kosher bakery, Jewish Day Schools, Synagogues, etc. After having lunch on your own, we will visit *Temple Beth El* and *Neve Chalom*. In the afternoon, an option is to walk Casablanca's Corniche (beachfront district) in the *Ain Diab* suburb. This is the city's vortex for those who want to see and be seen. During the day, the many beach clubs here do a roaring trade, with sun worshipers lapping up the rays and splashing in the club swimming pools. Dinner at kosher restaurant and overnight in Casablanca.

## Wednesday, March 1st: Rabat - Fès

Breakfast at the hotel and departure to Rabat, the current capital of Morocco and one of the Imperial Cities. Rabat was founded in the 12th century by the Almohad ruler *Abd al-Mu'min* as a military town. The city steadily grew but went into an extended period of decline

following the collapse of the Almohads. In the 17th century Rabat became a haven for Barbary pirates. The French established a protectorate over Morocco in 1912 and made



Rabat its administrative center. Morocco achieved independence in 1956 and Rabat became its capital. Here, we will visit the *Mellah*, which is of recent creation, since it was only in 1808, under the reign of Sultan Moulay Slimane, that the Jews were forced to live in this quarter, above the cliffs overlooking the river. Next stop is the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, which houses the tombs of the current king's father and grandfather. After lunch (on your own), we will



continue our trip to Fès. Upon arrival, check in at the hotel and dinner on your own. Look for a place to sample some of the local flavors such as *zalouk*, a common side dish and typically served with crusty bread. The spread is made with eggplants, tomatoes, garlic, olive oil and spices. Overnight in Fès.

### Thursday, March 2nd: Chefchaouen

Morning departure to Chefchaouen, also known as the Blue pearl of Morocco. Chefchaouen was founded in 1471 in the Rif mountains by Jews and Moors fleeing Spain. There are lot of different (some quite unbelievable) theories about why Chefchaouen is blue. Some say it



was painted blue by the Jews who settled there after fleeing Hitler, others say it's to keep the mosquitos away, while some just said it represents the color of the sea. In any case, keep in mind that Chefchaouen is a city to wander and take pictures, a place to be,

to take a break from many of the tourist touts in other cities, to watch the sunset from the roof or your riad, or to lose yourself in the cool hues that grace almost every wall and doorway in town. Nonetheless, we will visit some sites, as the Medina, *Square Uta el-Hamman*, *Kasbah*... After our day, we will return to Fès. Dinner on your own. You may try *bissara*, a rich and hearty soup made from dried fava beans and commonly served during breakfast. Typically, it will be topped with fresh olive oil and a sprinkle of cumin. Overnight in Fés.

### Friday, March 3rd: Fès

After having a delicious breakfast at our hotel, we will enjoy a guided city tour of Fès. The first stop will be at the *Mellah* where we will be able to admire the Synagogues: *Ibn Danan* and *Slat al Fassiyine*, as well as the Jewish cemetery, only a few steps away. Continue with a panoramic view of the ancient medina (old city). Enjoy an authentic experience at the traditional ceramic crafts village of Fès after that. Your next stop is *Fès El Bali*, the ancient town or Medina, which is a medieval part of Fès that has not changed for centuries. We will visit the famous *Al-Karaouine* mosque that became home to the University of *Al-Karaouine*, which is the first university in the world and the world's foremost center of learning at the beginning of the second



millennium. The university was built in 859, and, since then, it has become one of the leading spiritual and educational centers of the Muslim world. Visit also a *Medersa*, which is a Coranic school. Complete the city tour of Fès at the “leather *Souq*” and the oldest leather tannery in the world. The tannery dates back at least nine centuries. Shabbat & dinner with the local Community and overnight in Fès.

### Saturday, March 4th: Fès

After several days with a lot of traveling and sightseen, we propose you a relaxing day. An important part of the holistic Morocco experience is the wonderful Moroccan Spa. Some suggestions are a Hammam and a massage with argan oil, rich in vitamin E. However, there are many other options to treat yourselves; manicure, pedicure,



reflexology, natural face packs are just some of them. All spa products are sourced or made locally. Most are organic, made using ancient recipes handed down by elders. Still, and should you prefer, you can still attend morning services at the Synagogue and use the rest of

the day to keep enjoying this fabulous city for shoppers. Fès el Bali is a paradise of local craftwork, with colorful Moroccan slippers, leatherwork, metalwork, rainbow-glass lamps and tiles all displayed at stalls throughout the district. The streets west of the *Qaraouiyine* Mosque have the greatest concentration of shopping opportunities. Leather shops surrounding the tanneries provide bird's-eye views over the area from their rooftops and are the best place to take photos. Dinner on your own. Find a place to sample *tagine*. It's a clay cooking pot with a conical lid with multiple types of dishes slow cooked inside. You can get it practically anywhere, at roadside stops, cafés and nice restaurants.



Couscous is also originally from Morocco and typically served with meat or vegetable stew. Traditionally, they prepare couscous on the Muslim holy day (Friday) and for special occasions, but you can find it at most restaurants and cafes. Overnight in Fès.

## Sunday 5th: Fès – Marrakech

Departure in the morning towards Marrakech. In our way, we will stop in Meknes, one of the four imperial cities. Meknes, the city of Moulay Ishmael, is one of the only cities in Morocco where the



*mellah* does not adjoin the royal palace. It is also the only city where Jews decided to create a new *mellah* after the French Protectorate was installed. The European city houses several synagogues as well as a community center. The new *mellah* is still the home for some of Meknes's 100 Jews,

and one can visit a beautiful synagogue, the El Krief, nearby the new cemetery. We will continue our journey to Marrakech. Upon arrival, we will check in at the hotel and are ready to end the day with a visit to the world famous *Jemaa El Fna* Square where you will be amazed by the fire eaters, snake charmers, storytellers and peddlers of traditional medicines. Overnight in Marrakech.

## Monday, March 7th: Marrakech

Today, we will enjoy a guided tour of the city. The city regained its preeminence under wealthy Saadian Sultans Abu Abdallah al-Qaim and Ahmad al-Mansur, who embellished the city with sumptuous palaces such as *El Badi Palace* (1578) and restored many ruined monuments.

After visiting this sumptuous Palace, we will head to the *mellah*, the Jewish Quarter. In cities all over Morocco, *mellahs* flourished and became small cities within cities. At its peak in the 1500s, the *mellah* in Marrakech included bakers, jewelers, tailors, sugar traders, artisans,



craft people, outdoor markets, fountains and synagogues. Still operational in the *mellah* is the Lazama Synagogue which is open to the public. The Jewish Cemetery is a short walk away.



The Koutoubia Mosque, which is an old monument built under the reign of the Almoravid Caliph Yaqub al-Mansur (1184 to 1199) is next. This monument inspired other buildings such as the *Giralda* in Seville (Spain) and the Hassan Tower in Rabat. In the afternoon, we will visit the Marjorelle Gardens and the Yves St Laurent Museum. After, we will go to the Medina, old city. Here, you are encouraged to



look for a place to try Moroccan mint tea with one of these desserts: *Kaab el Ghazal*, or gazelle horns, are crescent-shaped pastries have almond paste scented with orange flower water and cinnamon. You can't leave Morocco without

having some of these delicious sweets! *Briwat* is a deep-fried filo pastry. It is in shaped like a triangle and filled with almonds. Another delicious dessert, *shubakia* is a flower-shaped, fried sesame cookie dipped in honey. You'll usually find bees all over them in the markets, and they just shoo them away before serving them to you. It's all part of the experience. Return to hotel and prepare for Purim celebration with the local community and overnight in Marrakech.

## **Tuesday, March 7th: Desert of Agafay**

Today, you will have the opportunity to discover life in a Berber village while visiting a family home, enjoy the beautiful landscapes and a guided hike to the waterfalls. These unique places will captivate you forever. We will first reach the village of Asni, then continue through Ghighya valley and pass in front of the Tamadot Kasbah to reach the valley of the Imlil in the mountains of the Atlas with stunning views. Meet with your guide and enjoy a walk through waterfalls and Berber villages. After the hike, you will have a traditional lunch at a local Berber house. While driving through the Desert we will stop at the village of Aguer gour, where you will take a Berber tea with an indigenous family who will make you discover its traditions. Then we will continue to Lake Lalla Takerkoust, the one that supplies this arid region of Morocco with water. Then we will continue to desert Agafay for a short camel ride. Return to Marrakech and overnight.



## Wednesday, March 8th: Essaouira

Today we will travel by coach to Essaouira, a seaside fishing town known for its hand painted charming blue, white and yellow houses, fresh seafood and artist community. It also has an expansive beach for surfing called *Plage de Safi*. And regarding Jewish presence,



Mohammed III –who ruled between 1757 and 1790–encouraged Moroccan Jews to settle in the town and handle the trade with Europe. In fact, André Azoulay, currently King's Jewish advisor, is a son of

Essaouira. Jews once comprised 40% of the population, and the *mellah* still contains many old synagogues. The town also has a large Jewish cemetery. The city flourished until the caravan trade died, superseded by direct European shipping trade with sub-Saharan Africa. Changes in trade, the founding of Israel, the resulting wars with Arab states, and the independence of Morocco all resulted in Sephardic Jews leaving the country. As of 2017, Essaouira had only three Jewish inhabitants. Still, each year religious Jews from around the world come to Essaouira for an annual pilgrimage to visit the grave of Rabbi Haim Pinto. Today, both the home of Rabbi Haim Pinto and the synagogue have been preserved as a historic and religious site. Farewell dinner at the beach and return to Marrakech.



## Thursday, March 9th: Departure

Morning transfer to Casablanca/Marrakech airport and return home.