



A Moroccan Jewish Journey

Thursday 15th – Sunday 25th October 2009

With Jeremy Leigh & Julian Resnick

Thursday October 15th

And so begins our Moroccan Jewish journey... on the border between Europe and Africa, between East and West...

We land in the capital city of Rabat after lunch from Paris and enter the complex, and at times confusing, world of Muslim – Jewish relations at the extraordinary Mausoleum complex of King Mohammed V. We will leave Rabat, but only after we take in the view, drink the mint tea and eat the Moroccan delicacies at Café Maure in the ancient Kasbah. From here we move on to the ancient royal city of Meknes. Our day ends, as will many of our days, in a Moroccan restaurant, where we will be introduced to tagines with a group dinner* of lamb and chicken, salads, couscous and of course wonderful cups of tea and baklava.

Overnight Meknes

Friday October 16th

We spend the day touring the second of our Royal cities, Meknes. Surrounded by the elaborate buildings of Moulay Ismail, the second of the Alouite monarchs, we will explore the grand and imperial, as well as the hidden, sides of Morocco's seventeenth century capital. We introduce the Jewish story here with a visit to the Mellah (the old Jewish quarter), visiting both the synagogue in the Mellah as well as having Kabbalat Shabbat in the synagogue in the Ville Nouveau (the new city), the only synagogue still in use by the tiny remnant of a once large community. After the service we have a group Friday evening dinner*. Sites include the Palace and Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail, Bab el-Mansour, Place el Hdime, Stables Bab el Khemis

Overnight Meknes

Saturday October 17th

Leaving Meknes, we travel to the ancient capital of Fes, via the two dramatic cities of Morocco's remarkable past. Volubilis and Moulay Idriss. Both challenge the fundamentals of modern Jewish life: in Volubilis the ancient Roman city of which only the ruins of this once great city remain with its ties to the very origins of the Jewish Diaspora; and in Moulay Idriss on the sacred

territory of Moroccan Islam where we can only approach the perimeter of the holy city and not enter into its inner sanctums, the notions of exclusion arise. If the weather is good we will picnic* on the way. We end our day coming into the city of Fes to continue our Moroccan and Jewish stories, stories within stories. Dinner in the hotel*

Overnight Fes

Sunday October 18th (Fes)

The ancient city of Fes was home to one of the great Jewish communities of the medieval world. It was here that Maimonides came fleeing the travails of Spain and Isaac Al-Fasi built the community as one of the earliest centres of rabbinic scholarship outside Babylon. It is here that we confront the contrasting meanings of the Mellah and Jewish – Muslim separation as we visit the Ibn Danan Synagogue as well as the ancient Madrasa of Fes, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the world. But Fes is about the souk as well and not only issues of the mind. We will be entranced by the colour as we go through 'souk therapy' the ancient cousin of 'retail therapy' in the twists and turns of the ancient bazaar. Sites include Fes El Bali: Foundouk Yahudi; Fes el Jdid: Bouannia Medersa, the Mellah; home of Maimonides / Ibn Maimun; Jewish Cemetery; Ibn Danan Synagogue.

In Fes we will spend both the mornings touring and both the afternoons in a more relaxed fashion allowing you to spend time either enjoying the Palais Jemai or in the souk shopping or in the Hamam.

Overnight Fes

Monday October 19th

We continue in Fes.

Overnight Fes

Tuesday October 20th

Depart Fes for 3 day journey south, via Erfoud, Ourzazate and the High Atlas to Marrakesh. En route, away from the cities of the north, we will seek out the other Jewish stories of Morocco in villages and desert oases. This promises to be a challenging experience through desert and mountain landscapes. This is our day of the long drive. During this day we will pass through extraordinary scenery moving from Mediterranean areas through Cedar forests, mountain passes, the Middle and the High Atlas Mountains, pre-desert areas, sand dunes and the Sahara desert. We will take stops along the way for comfort and lunch* and to visit the fossils of the region. We end the day in Merzouga and if you have a Déjà vu moment it is because you have seen it before. Merzouga is one of the favourite spots for Hollywood directors when filming desert scenes. If you saw Babel, Gladiator, you have been here, at least virtually. Dinner* in our Auberge.

Overnight Merzouga

Wednesday October 21st

A really special day with an extraordinary beginning. Get up very early morning and travel by jeep or camel to see sunrise over the Sahara, returning for breakfast and relaxation and the next leg of our journey. Onward drive to through the High Atlas to Ouarzazate via the magnificent Todra gorges where we lunch* and Tenehir, sites of the story of the Jews from the mountains. Dinner in the hotel*

Overnight Ouarzazate

Thursday October 22nd

'Visible Morocco, disappearing France and Invisible Jews': We depart Ouarzazate on the last leg of the drive to Marrakech, stopping en route at former Jewish / Berber villages and explore the profound questions of presence and absence in this most remarkable of landscapes including a visit of the verdant Valley of Ourika in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains. This drive will include a stopover at the UNESCO world Heritage site of Casbah Ait ben Haddou (one of the oldest inhabited Casbahs in the world) and a stop for lunch*. End the day in the magical city of Marrakech.

Overnight Marrakesh

Friday October 23rd

Marrakech is the great tourist destination in Morocco filled with both the laid back spirit of Morocco and the influences of Europe especially France. It is the most sophisticated of the cities we will have visited in Morocco. We will focus on our first day in Marrakech on the wonderful Moroccan monuments and Palaces of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the afternoon you will have time to either relax by the pool or venture into the great souk.

We end the day with a Friday evening service in the Marrakech synagogue and a group meal*.

Overnight Marrakesh

Saturday October 24th

Marrakech is at the heart of the Moroccan Jewish story and what was once the largest Jewish quarter in the Arab world. We will use Shabbat to explore this once great community. We visit the great Mellah, and the ancient Jewish cemetery and the wonderful Moroccan monuments and Palaces of the 17th and 18th centuries. We examine the story of the Jewish Community in the 20th century, Zionism and the impact of the State of Israel on the Moroccan Jewish story. Shabbat afternoon will include the option of enjoying the delights of a Hamam (bathhouse) in the souk. We end Shabbat with the most unusual Havdalah you will ever experience in an apothecary's shop in the old souk which will give a new meaning to the blessing on the spices, of 'minei

besamim' , we say in the Havdalah service. So, after one last bout of 'souk therapy', a final dinner* and a wrap up session it is all the fun of the square in the extraordinary Dejar al Fanaar with its food stalls, story tellers, musicians, henna artists, horses and carriages and snake charmers, and then we will be ready to return to a very different world, both in terms of our Jewish lives and our lives as westerners.

Overnight Marrakesh

Sunday October 25th

We leave at the crack of dawn for Casablanca and the journey home.

Subject to Change