

Temple Beth Hillel - Beth El Adventure to Morocco Led by Rabbi Neil & Lori Cooper March 8 - 19, 2020

(As of 11/26/18)



Day 1: Sunday, March 8, 2020: DEPARTURE

- We depart on our overnight flight to Morocco.

Day 2: Monday, March 9, 2020: CASABLANCA

- We arrive at Casablanca International Airport, where we are met by an Ayelet Tours representative.
- We drive into the city of **Casablanca**, Morocco's cosmopolitan economic and business capital. Originally, a Phoenician and Roman city, Casablanca is home to the largest Jewish community in the Arab world.
- We begin our tour at the **Mellah of Casablanca**, a former Jewish quarter similar to a European ghetto. It tantalizes the senses with a sea of women in brightly colored djellabas carrying and selling fruit and vegetables throughout the cramped, narrow streets. While Jews no longer live in the Mellah, kosher butchers are found in the old market. We will also stop to see the **Jewish cemetery**, which is quiet with well-kept white stone markers in French, Hebrew and Spanish.
- Next, we discover the **Boulevard Mohamed El Hansali**, with its exotic bazaars, **Mohammed V square**, the new **Medina Royal Palace** and **Anfa Hill**, the meeting place of Roosevelt and Churchill at the Casablanca Conference during World War II.
- After our beautiful city tour, we check into our hotel and spend the remainder of our day at leisure.
- We enjoy a **welcome dinner** at Cercle de L'Union, followed by a festive **Purim celebration** with members of the Casablanca Jewish community.

Overnight in Casablanca



Day 3: Tuesday, March 10, 2020: CASABLANCA – MEKNES - FEZ

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we visit **Neve Shalom Jewish School** and bring shalach manot to the children in celebration of Purim. We follow this with a guided walk through the **Moroccan Jewish Museum**, which was founded by the Jewish community of Casablanca in 1997 and is managed by the Judeo-Moroccan Cultural Heritage Foundation. It is the only Jewish museum in the Arab region. The building was originally an orphanage for the protection of Jewish children. Inside the museum you will find two distinct spaces; one reserved for the temporary exhibition and one for the permanent exhibition.
- We stop at the **Hassan II Mosque**, inaugurated in 1994, and one of the largest in the world outside of Mecca.
- Our tour continues at the **OZE Health Center**, originally started in St. Petersburg and later headquartered in Paris before moving to North Africa and Israel. The program is devoted to the promotion of health, hygiene and childcare and providing healthcare for Jews in places with inferior sanitary conditions.
- We stop for **lunch** at the famous **Rick's Café**.
- We depart for the “Holy city” of **Moulay-Idriss**, noted for its breathtaking scenery. Upon arrival, we visit the **archaeological ruins of Volubilis**, once home to a flourishing Jewish community.
- We continue to the imperial city of **Meknes**, considered the “Versailles of North Africa”. Meknes includes ancient and modern Mellah, the location of the tomb of Rabbi David Bousaidan and also houses several synagogues, a community center and a Jewish cemetery.
- In Meknes, we visit the **Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail**, who established his royal capital there during his reign from 1672-1727, then continue with a visit to one of the **Royal Stables**, constructed to house at least 12,000 of the royal horses belonging to Moulay Ismail.
- In the late afternoon, we travel to **Fez**, one of Morocco’s most fascinating cities, once the home of Maimonides and among the best-known cities in medieval Jewish history. Jews were among the first settlers in Fes at the end of the 8th century and rapidly became influential and commanded great respect. They had their own living quarter and became a cultural and commercial center of prime importance largely as a result of the Jewish presence. In 1465, most of the Jews were massacred and the Jewish population did not recover until 1492 during the expulsion from Spain.
- Upon arrival, we check into our hotel and refresh before **dinner** together this evening.



Overnight in Fez



Day 4: Wednesday, March 11, 2020: EXPLORING FEZ

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Our day begins with a visit to the medieval **Medina**. We also see the **Karaouine mosque** and the **Nejjarine fountain**.
- We enjoy **lunch** together this afternoon.
- After lunch, we enjoy a guided visit through the **Ibn Danan Synagogue**, located in the heart of the mellah (Jewish quarter). Originally the synagogue was built and owned by a prominent Moroccan Jewish family in the 17th century and was renovated to its present form at the end of the 19th century. It is now a historical monument due to the lack of Jews in the area.
- We continue to the “**Arabian house**”, a gathering place for craftsman still working in the old oriental tradition.
- We complete our day with a visit to one of the leather-making **tanneries** dating back to the 11th century.
- Evening at leisure and dinner on own.



Overnight in Fez

Day 5: Thursday, March 12, 2020: RABAT

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We depart for **Rabat**, the modern capital of Morocco, also known as the white imperial city.
- Upon arrival, we set out on a **walking tour**, strolling around the walls of the palace and visiting the **Mausoleum of Mohamad V and Hassan II**, the two rulers who worked hand-in-hand with the Jewish community.
- We stop for **lunch** together at a local restaurant.
- Our tour continues in the **Old Walled City** and on to the **Oudayas Kasbah**, one of Morocco’s most unique sites.
- Later this afternoon, we check into our hotel and refresh before **dinner** together at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Rabat



Day 6: Friday, March 13, 2020: DISCOVERING MARRAKECH

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Early this morning, we depart for **Marrakech**, city of palm trees and gardens at the edge of the Sahara Desert. Jews have lived in Marrakech since the first century. Marrakech sees a lot of Jewish visitors, including many flocking from Israel to experience its unique culture and Jewish history.
- We stop for **lunch** en route.
- In Marrakech, we meander through the teeming alleyways of the **Medina** with its market and palaces, museums, stores and hidden mysteries, including the **Saadian Tombs**, built in the 16th century as a mausoleum for many Saadian rulers and entertainers. We also see the **Bahia Palace**, a grandiose 19th century palace replete with intricate woodwork and mosaics that rival the intricacies of the lives of the Sultans who ruled their minions from this palace. We conclude our tour with a visit to the **Djemaa El-Fna**, the bustling central square in the medina, with its snake charmers, magicians, food stalls and much more.
- Later this afternoon, we check into our hotel and have time to relax and refresh.
- This evening, we join together for **Kabbalat Shabbat** at the **Marrakech Synagogue**, followed by a festive **Shabbat dinner** at the home of the Ohayon family with members of the Marrakech Jewish community.

Overnight in Marrakech

Day 7: Saturday, March 14, 2020: SHABBAT SHALOM!

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we have the option of attending **Shabbat services** at **Slat Al Azama Synagogue** in the Mellah, known as the “synagogue of the exiles”, which hosted generations of young Berbers who converted to Judaism and were sent to learn the Torah before deserting the community. After the service, we enjoy a **Kiddush lunch** with community members at the Ohayon home.
- This afternoon, we take a **walking tour** through the **Majorelle Garden**, created by French painter Jacques Majorelle and owned by Pierre Berge and Yves Saint-Laurent until his death in 2008.
- We meet again at sundown for a special **Havdallah**, followed by a **Moroccan fantasia show** and **dinner** at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Marrakech



Day 8: Sunday, March 15, 2020: THE OURIKA VALLEY

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we depart for **Ourika Valley** in the High Atlas Mountains for a glimpse at the life of the Moroccan Berber community. Here, we see the special relationship the Moroccan Jewish community has with the Ourika Valley.
- Next, we visit the grave of the tzaddik, **Rabbi Shlomo ben Hensh**, where the first Berber and Moroccan Jews have visited for generations for prayer and special requests. We hear the story of **Hananiyah Elfassie**, one of the last Berber Jews, who devoted his life to protecting the grave and preserving Rabbi Hensh's memory.
- We stop to enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant.
- This afternoon, we visit one of the **Berber villages and farms**, including a possible donkey ride to the **Setti Fatma falls** (additional cost).
- We return to Marrakech for **dinner** at our hotel.



Overnight in Marrakech

Day 9: Monday, March 16, 2020: MARRAKECH TO ESSAOUIRA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Today, we travel to **Essaouira**, an easy to navigate city. Although originally Portuguese, Essaouira was fortified by a French-influenced architect named Vauban, and also formed the settling ground for a large Jewish population, which is why the city has an eclectic, multicultural feel. The town was once over thirty percent Jewish and contained over thirty synagogues, some dating back to the eighteenth century.
- We stop for **lunch** en route.
- Upon arrival, we check into our hotel with time to relax before we join together for **dinner** this evening.

Overnight in Essaouira



Day 10: Tuesday, March 17, 2020: DISCOVERING ESSAOUIRA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we visit the **tomb of Rabbi Chaim Pinto**, who is the object of an annual pilgrimage in the week preceding Rosh Hashanah, situated in the vast **Jewish cemetery** adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. We also visit the **Chaim Pinto Synagogue**, the building that was once the rabbi's home and is now a historic site.
- We stop to enjoy **lunch** along the way.
- This afternoon, we see many Argan trees, important to the region both economically and ecologically. At the **women's cooperative of Argan oil**, there will be an opportunity to learn about the wide-ranging applications of the oil from cosmetics to medicines.
- This evening, we join together for **dinner** at our hotel.



Overnight in Essaouira

Day 11: Wednesday, March 18, 2020: RETURNING TO CASABLANCA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Spend the morning relaxing in Essaouira.
- This afternoon, we travel up the coast to **Casablanca**, stopping for several photo opportunities along the way.
- Upon arrival, we check into our hotel, then enjoy a festive **farewell dinner** at one of the trendy restaurants, recalling all that we have experienced together on this journey.

Overnight in Casablanca

Day 12: Thursday, March 19, 2020: DEPARTURE

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.

THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!!

**Itinerary subject to change*

