

MOROCCO TOUR



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I want to thank my amazing family for supporting me during this trip.



I dedicated this trip to Jo-Ann, loving friend, who passed away.



Thanks to my good friend Alain Laliberté.

BMW Motorrad
Thanks to Claude Gagné
Certified Instructor BMW Germany
On Road / Off Road / Marshal GS Trophy
BMW MOA Amdassador World / Ridaventure.ca Ambassador

My experience in Morocco



I always had in mind that Morocco was the Sahara desert. I was definitely wrong. It is not just a desert at all, it is a beautiful country full of forest, mountains and much history. I was very surprised by the beauty of Morocco especially the natural resources: phosphates, mineral mining, farming, seafood and agriculture.

Morocco is a country located in North Africa. It overlooks the Mediterranean Sea to the north and Atlantic Ocean to the West. It was founded in 788AD. It also has the largest commercial port in Africa located on its Mediterranean coast and called Tanger-Med. Morocco has one of the best road systems on the continent.

My name is Gilles Robert from Québec, Canada.

My Morocco trip...



I arrived in Malaga, Spain; the largest city on the Costa del Sol, where I met Su and Johnny, owners of MOTOADVENTURES who I was to spend the next 15 days travelling with.



I took a day to visit this beautiful city.



The harbor on the Atlantic Ocean is covered by beautiful ships.



Went over to the motorcycle shop to get our bikes for the trip. The camper in the background is the support vehicle driven by our guide Su.



Entered Morocco by ferry, docking at Tanger-Ville (Tanger town smaller port) and rode through the city of Tanger. The city is chiefly famed for Tangerines, hence the name.



First night we stopped in a very colourful town called Chefchaouen south east of Tanger.





Chefchaouen is known for its striking, blue-washed buildings.



Leather and weaving workshops line its steep cobbled lanes.





After leaving Chefchaouen, spent another beautiful day in the countryside where there was agriculture, fruits and olive plantations.



Stopped for lunch in small café who served a home grown fresh vegetable salad topped with their olive oil, followed by a chicken Tagine - a Moroccan speciality.





After leaving the café we visited the Roman ruins of the city of Volubilis, our first UNESCO Heritage site. Then entered Fes (UNESCO) where we spent the night in a nice Riad hotel, a converted old local house in the medina. Very well received with cold beer after a hot day.





On the way to Fes, several farmers loading their horses in their trailers and carrying their produce.





On our ride through this beautiful country filled with apple, cherry orchards and olive plantations. Then stopped for coffee in a town baptized Little Switzerland (Ifrane) by the French because of the cool temperatures and architecture.





At a higher elevation, I stopped at a ski station and entered a plateau of 2000 meters in altitude for over 10 kilometres. They have snow barriers which in winters are sometimes lowered due to snow, closing the road for days.





Rode down through the Gorges de Ziz and past a large water reservoir, the area resembled the Grand Canyon. Rain nearly caught us but our precautionary guide John managed to go around the storm. Our group entered the beginning of a sand storm. Finally reaching our destination: Nasser Palace, Merzouga in the Sahara Desert.





The morning after I reached Merzouga, I traded in the BMW for a KTM 450 Enduro – but only for the day off! Had great fun biking up and descending the highest dunes in Morocco, located at Erg Chebbi alongside Merzouga. Some reach +200m!





From Mergouza to Dades, rode many kilometres in the desert. On our way we met a group of 50 motorcyclists from Portugal. Stopped at Todra Gorge (UNESCO) for lunch, there was an impressive view of the cliffs. I was given a scarf by a nomad which is used for protection for wind and sand. On the photo above, you can see people rock climbing up the 400m high wall. The ride today gave me a chance to recuperate from the Enduro.





In Dades we stayed in an amazing hotel where the swimming pool and hot jacuzzi were located on it's rooftop terrace. It is beautiful when lit at night. Leaving Dades we took a 120km detour up through the famous Dades Gorge, well known for it's spectacular road with many tight hairpin bends. Definitely one of Morocco's must does on a bike.





Met people walking with their camels, mountain bikers and finally a market place for fruits and vegetables on the side of the road. Had a great day, did a bit of a cultural visit through mountain roads with very steep cliffs and no protections.





Stopped in Motoaventures' garage in Ouarzazate, their mechanic was rebuilding a damaged engine caused by sand. Met Maryam their secretary.





Quick stop at the Atlas Film Studios then on to our hotel Ksarlgnda in Ait Ben Haddou. (UNESCO)





This morning we left very early and arrived late afternoon. We rode up one of the main mountain passes Tizi n Test – 2093m – and stopped to have lunch in a café near the top. A narrow, winding road, part dirt and part paved crossing the Atlas Mountains before reaching our destination in the mountain village of Ouirgane.





The top part of the mountain was covered in fog, it was quite an experience. Arrived at our hotel Chez Momo in the mountains; landscaping was amazing, flowers everywhere and some nice lemon trees perfect for Martinis!!



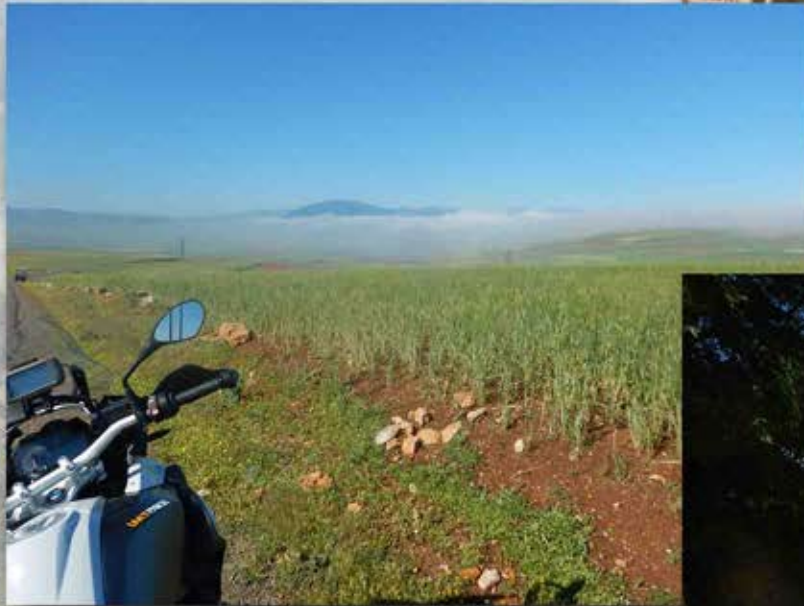


Another long and beautiful day starting in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, then slowly descending our way down to the lower agricultural areas with small villages on to the Atlantic coast.





Had lunch in small bistro then entered Essaouira, a beautiful medina (fortified town) by the sea. (UNESCO)





Today was rest day, so I woke up early had breakfast, went to wash my moto then off to the fishing Port. Believed to be the last port where they still hand build the large wooden sea trawlers. Essaouira was a fortress with port, built by the Portuguese in the 15th century. I saw many small blue boats, the sardine fleet, waiting for the tide to rise. The catch of the day was a surprising array of fish.





Shops were selling local products: spices, grains, almonds & walnuts. Went for lunch around 2:00 p.m. with my happy friends who thought everything was pretty cool! Always been considered a "laid back" place Jimmy Hendrix visited many times.





Left Hotel Le Medina this morning, destination Marrakech – The Red City. Motos were prepared for the next bit of road. We crossed lots of farming lands, a farmer carrying his goats, a herd of sheep, children heading for school & a farmer with his grain cutter.





Marrakech is 580 km south west of Tangier. It is a world heritage site (UNESCO).
In the market I stopped for my Espresso at Café Montréal.





The city center is the main square called Jemaa el Fna where all the action takes place at night. During the day we walked through the souk area that surrounds the square where there were plentiful stalls selling almost everything. Spices, fresh vegetables, a selection of freshly pressed fruit juices, olives, carpets, watches and mobile phones and much much more. A vibrant interesting city to visit.





On route to our next stop we diverted up a small road to visit the Cascades d'Ouzoud - beautiful waterfalls some with 110m drop, then we rode to the largest man made lake in north Africa, Bin El Ouidane. We finally arrived at our luxury hotel, Widiane.





This morning left Bin El Ouidane and headed northeast direction of Fes beautiful area high in the Atlas Mountains where there is a lot of snow higher up, twisting roads all the way. I met this gentleman farmer who let me photograph him. Snack lunch out of the camper as everything is closed during the day because of Ramadan.





Stopped at an Olive Oil artisan factory which was closed because of the holy day. Then having ridden through the magnificent cedar tree forests occupied by barbary apes, we reached our destination in the village of Azrou, near Little Switzerland - Le Palais des Cerisiers. "The Cherry Palace" I had my photo taken with the manager Benoît a local who also is an American citizen as he worked most of his life in Texas. The area has 1500 cherry trees that will be ready for the picking at the end of May!





Took a photo of my guide Johnny and I as we entered Ifrane. We were heading to the blue village of Chefchaouen again for our overnight stay.

In Chefchaouen Su & I went and bought spices in a colourful tiny shop crammed full of all sorts of natural products made locally. Called Aladdin's Grandmother's Shop.





Left Chefchaouen early and went on a new route that brought us to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. A beautiful route, there is definitely a lot of money on this sea coast. Had lunch again from the Camper because of Ramadan which lasts a month. It was a pleasant lunch on the coast with a view of Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar.

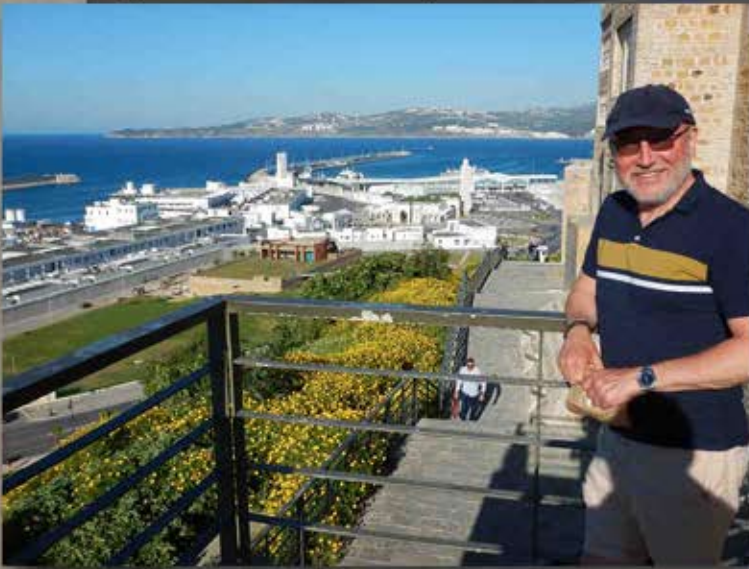


Then moved on to Tanger at the Hotel Cesar, beautiful place by the sea. Paul and I went to the Medina in the Center of the city, meat and food market, the streets are very narrow but beautiful.





Today my last day was exceptionally good, meeting nice people on the way, then went on to visit Gibraltar; a U.K. Territory. Su and Johnny had a special arrangement made so we were able to bike to the top of the Rock. The road is closed to the public. This made my day, it was just marvellous. If you ever have the opportunity go for it. Back down, at the end I saw those monster machines from North America.







MOROCCO

N

0 150 km

Mediterranean Sea

Atlantic Ocean



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