

## Morocco September 2017

Our travel company, known for small group trips, was unique. They used native guides and featured visits with local families. We were going to camp out in the desert for a few days, ride camels and be a witness to a very different culture, multiracial mostly Muslim, still rooted in crafts and agriculture with a foot in the modern industrial world.

Our first stop was Rabat, the capital. Morocco is located at the northwestern tip of Africa. Across the Mediterranean is Europe and there are many influences visible as you travel and learn its history which has contributed to their culture of tolerance. French and Arabic are the languages that predominate as the French ruled Morocco for many years

Their government is a monarchy and appears to be a benevolent and principled one, tempered by the dominant religion which teaches charity and devotion. Muslims do not drink alcohol and the government does not allow people to own guns.

You will see photos of their famous markets which are mostly indoors, to keep the heat out as there is not much refrigeration and goods are sold on a daily basis. Rugs, clothing, jewelry and agricultural goods line the narrow halls with many vendors.

The buildings and architecture reflect the various cultural influences as well. There's a lack of advertising and de-emphasis on the human image. They do not like tourists to take photos of them in general. They are humble people and very family oriented with generations living together. There are many beautiful mosques to visit as well.

Clothing is loose and simple with many head coverings and styles depending on religious beliefs. Their modesty, I found to be lovely in its simplicity. There is an emphasis on education and women are working to increase their freedoms as they do all over the world.

There are photos of our campsite, cabins, and the desert landscape. We were served traditional foods, like Tajine, a stew of meat and vegetables and other native foods by our cook. One day, we were driven to the site where we would ride our camels to a nearby destination for lunch.

As you can see there are many ruins from the Roman presence in the country and so the landscape has many historic sites to see. Water is a precious resource and has influenced the lack of development in outlying areas of the country. We saw abandoned communities as we traveled around.

The Nomads offer a glimpse of the way people have adapted to their desert home. They move where there is food, water and some education for their children. They hosted us and served peppermint tea, while we asked them questions about their family life.

There are signs of modernity especially in the cities and you will see young women with the head covering and wearing jeans and men in modern western clothing.