

Desert Cavalcade, Morocco

Itinerary

Day 1

Enjoy dinner with your fellow riders and discuss the trail ahead.

Overnight in hotel in Ouarzazate.

Day 2

After breakfast you will be met by your guide in the hotel lobby at 06:30.

Transfer from Ouarzazate and drive south east in the direction of Zagora (about 3 hours' drive). You will meet the horses and after a ride briefing, ride south-west until you cross Feija which already gives you an idea of the immensity of the desert.



Slowly you get close to the last mountain chain, the last obstacle to the Sahara, the Djebel (mount) Bani. You have to climb up the mountain along a small winding path but once at the pass you will have a breath-taking view of the Feija plateau and beyond to the Djebel Sagho. You then climb down a narrow gorge leading to a small oasis which is a usual stopping place for the nomads. Here you find your overnight camping spot.

Overnight camping (approximately 5 hours riding).

Day 3

You start the day across an arid plateau where only a few acacias are capable of surviving in the dry climate of the area. Then you reach the sand hills which will become higher and higher as you keep on riding south. The landscape in front of you is now boundless. This area is actually a nature reserve and gazelles and ostriches are being reintroduced.

Overnight camping by the Naam River (Naam means "ostrich" in Arabic) (approximately 5 hours riding).



Day 4

Riding through the sand dunes you can see nomad camps from time to time, these low tents made of camel or goat hairs are called "Kheïma". Then, you head towards the end of the Drâa Valley. A few houses appear out of the trees in the Bounou palm grove. The "ksar" (castle) is one of the most beautiful of the valley. You then reach Ouled Driss village where you will get a chance to visit the ksar and the little museum.

Overnight camping (approximately 5 hours riding).



Day 5

From here the pace can speed up a bit as you ride up the Draa Valley across a ribbon of sand hills and onto an arid plateau ("reg"). When you get through the Selmane pass, you will have a panoramic view over Tagounite palm grove. After passing through another sand dune you make your way towards Tagounite palm grove, through fields and villages proud of their decorated walls. Close to Nesrate village you reach what used to be a palm grove but is now under the sand.



Overnight camping in the dunes (approximately 5 hours riding).

Day 6

Today, you head back to the “hustle and bustle” of the villages with their fortified homes (ksour), gardens, burning sun and refreshing shade. The palm grove ends where the Draa River stretches between Djbel Bani & Djbel Tadrart. Continue onto a palm grove and camp in an oasis.



Overnight camping (approximately 4.5 hours riding).

Day 7

Continue heading north along trails that pass through the ksour and the cultivated fields of the palm grove. You reach Tinfou village where impressive sand dunes threaten to encroach upon the houses and fields. A programme against this desertification process was set up years ago but it seems to be inefficient. After lunch, transfer to Ouarzazate.

Overnight in hotel in Ouarzazate (approximately 2 hours riding).

Day 8

After breakfast transfer to Ouarzazate airport.

Accommodation

On the first night and last night you stay at a hotel in Ouarzazate.

During the ride you stay in two person dome tents with a porch at each end for baggage. You may have a tent to yourself.

Foam mattresses are supplied but you will need to bring a sleeping bag and camping pillow. Normally everyone helps with the setting up of the sleeping tents.



There is a large mess tent for eating and relaxing. There is also a chemical loo and a separate shower tent where you are provided with a large bucket of hot water for showering.



The support vehicle normally meets you for lunch and goes ahead to set up camp.