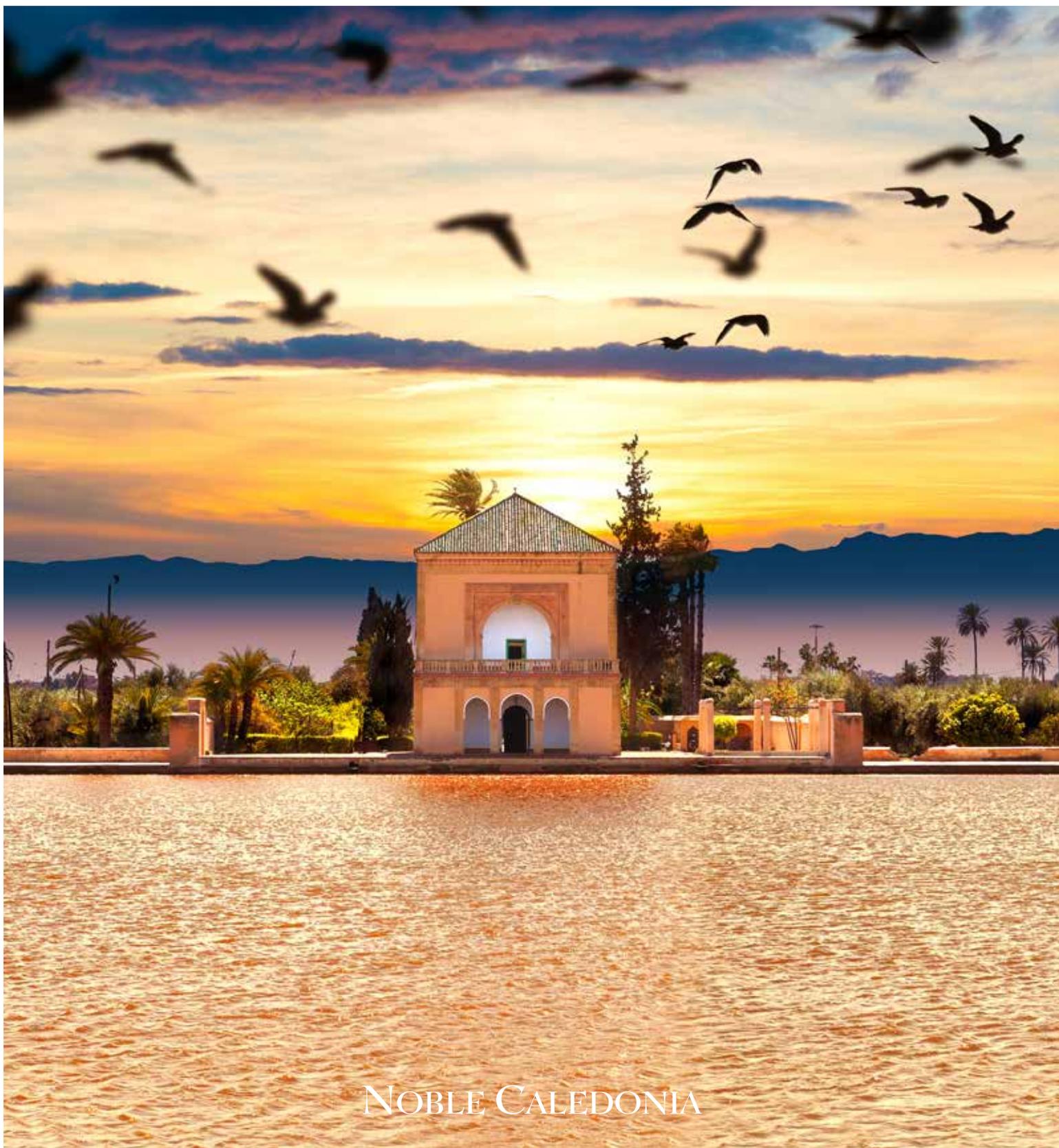


ENCHANTING MOROCCO

An escorted tour exploring Marrakech, the Atlas Mountains & Essaouira

12th to 20th October 2019 & 9th to 17th March 2020



NOBLE CALEDONIA

Morocco casts a spell over all who visit her extraordinary Kingdom. A history of over 3000 years including a Medieval empire which stretched from Spain to Libya. It has taken the best from the Phoenicians and Romans, Arabs and Africans, Muslims and Jews, indigenous Berbers and from periodic European colonisers from the Iberian Peninsula, and finally the French. The culture and architecture is unique and this combined with some staggeringly beautiful landscapes makes Morocco a marvellous place to visit.

We explore Marrakech and the surrounding countryside which offers the visitor a most rewarding experience. This oasis city at the foot of the Atlas Mountains provides a powerfully Moroccan atmosphere.

As you stroll through the old quarter there is an almost biblical feeling, as you encounter ancient customs and come across sudden beauty. It is no wonder that it has appealed to artists through the ages; for Henri Matisse it provided a turning point in his career and has effected such diverse characters as Winston Churchill and Jimi Hendrix. We will also spend time in the stunning Atlas Mountains and the atmospheric coastal city of Essaouira with its spice scented lanes and amazing mix of architecture.

During the course of eight nights, we will stay in three delightful properties, enjoy some fantastic cuisine and take an in-depth look at this exotic land. Looking out over the mountain and desert landscapes, exploring dramatic gorges, viewing delightful gardens and art galleries, soaking up the unique atmosphere of Essaouira and immersing yourself in the colourful souks in Marrakech is the perfect escape from modern life.

Difficult to convey in words, the essence of Morocco has to be experienced and our escorted visit offers the ideal arrangement.



Bahia Palace, Marrakech



Majorelle Garden, Marrakech



Evening market at Jemaa El Fna Square, Marrakech



Moroccan spices



Koutoubia Mosque

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Marrakech, Morocco. Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the Hotel Sofitel Marrakech. This evening enjoy a welcome dinner. (D)

Day 2 Marrakech. We will start our exploration of Marrakech at the 19th century Bahia Palace. Discover the intricate work undertaken by the local artisans on wood, plaster and tile to decorate this splendid home and garden which belonged to the Moroccan prime minister at that time. From here we will walk to El Badi Palace, which was built in the 16th century and admire what remains of its huge, four part garden and amazing architecture. We end our morning at the Majorelle Garden which houses a collection of plants from the four corners of the earth, flourishing amongst elegant ornamental ponds and an Art Deco villa of which the special shade of bold cobalt blue is named after the artist, the 'Majorelle Blue'. The garden hosts more than 15 bird species that are endemic to North Africa and has an amazing collection of cacti. In 1980, after years of neglect, the garden was taken over and restored by the fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Berge in order to save it from property developers. They nurtured the garden and opened the nation's first Berber museum in the process. Saint Laurent passed away in 2008 and his ashes were scattered in the rose garden of the Villa Oasis. Enjoy lunch at La Mamounia, where Winston Churchill liked to stay, and visit the beautiful gardens where he often set up his easel. Take a late afternoon stroll around Jemaa El Fna, the main square where hundreds of locals and tourists gather in the early evening to watch jugglers, dancers, fortune tellers, story tellers and traditional musicians. Enjoy an evening at leisure. (B, L)

Day 3 Marrakech. Today we will start our walking tour from one of the historical gates of Marrakech, Bab Debbagh, inside of which are a few operational old Moroccan leather tanneries. We will visit the funduqs, Medieval inns once used by the merchant caravans and stop to visit the private Museum of Photography, established as a place where old photographs of Morocco could be shown to an interested public. We will visit Ben Youssef, a Medieval school considered the highlight of the Moroccan architecture in Marrakech. We continue exploring the colourful dyers workshops, the tinsmiths, leather makers and wood painters will provide many opportunities to take interesting pictures. We stop for lunch at Dar Moha, set in a beautifully restored 19th century riad in the Medina. The riad was built for a secretary of the Pacha of Morocco and is the former home of fashion designer Pierre Balmain. After lunch we visit Le Jardin Secret, a garden that has been the home of some important political figures. This location is an outstanding example of Islamic garden art and architecture and is a part of

the great tradition of stately Arab-Andalusian and Moroccan palaces. Enjoy an evening at leisure. (B, L)

Day 4 Ourika Valley & Asni, Atlas Mountains. Today we head towards the Atlas Mountains to visit the organic and aromatic gardens nestled in the lush green valley of Ourika. As we reach the first foothills we will visit a saffron plantation and learn about this very old, expensive, almost mythical spice, its cultivation, and its culinary and therapeutic properties. We will enjoy a delicious Moroccan saffron tea before we continue to Nectarome, an aromatic garden located inside the valley where we will have a guided tour to discover the secrets and benefits of local plants as well as the Moroccan natural cosmetic products optimised by modern science. Our tour will be followed by a delicious lunch, carefully prepared with the organic vegetables and aromatic plants of the garden and served in its beautiful pergola. After lunch we will head to the valley of Asni, passing the gorges of Moulay Brahim and stopping to visit the eco museum in the national park before arriving at Domaine de la Roseraie & Spa in the Ouirgane Valley, our hotel for the next two nights. Dinner will be at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Ouirgane Valley, Atlas Mountains. After breakfast we will explore the beautiful Ouirgane Valley on a leisurely walk. Admire the contrast of the red soil with the green olive trees and visit a local village where we will be invited into a family home for traditional Moroccan tea. Return to the hotel and this afternoon enjoy a sensory experience through the luxuriant gardens of La Roseraie to learn more about the benefits of the aromatic plants, followed by



Berber village in the Ourika Valley



Traditional Moroccan tea



The Fortress and Medina at Essaouira

a stop in the beauty lab for a preparation of the Ghassoul mud mask, one of the best kept beauty secrets in the country. This afternoon is at leisure, perhaps indulge yourself with a hammam and massage treatment in the Pinewood Spa. Dinner will be at the hotel this evening. (B, D)

Day 6 Val d'Argan Winery & Essaouira. This morning we leave the Atlas Mountains and drive to the French owned wine property of Val D'Argan, a few miles from the city of Essaouira. The Val d'Argan vineyard was established by Charles Melia, an experienced winemaker of the Rhone valley in France, in 1994. It covers 128 acres, 100 of which are under cultivation, and it was the first Moroccan vineyard to be run organically. The vineyard produces a selection of red, white, rosé and, typically Moroccan, vin gris (gray) wines with many featured on wine lists in the restaurants of Essaouira and Marrakech. We will take a tour of the vineyard and have the opportunity to sample some of the wines, ending our visit with lunch at the onsite restaurant with a panoramic view of the vineyard and olive trees. We continue to Essaouira and check in to L'Heure Bleue Palais and take time to explore some of the historical sites of this old port city. Founded and occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century, in order to take advantage of the Trans-Saharan trade routes, the city was rebuilt in 1760 and named Essaouira. It has since attracted a great number of foreign visitors, as well as a large proportion of the Jewish community of Morocco and has become Morocco's international port and trading centre. We will see the impressive town fortifications consisting of an amazing mixture of Portuguese and Moroccan military architecture. Evening at leisure. (B, L)



in earthenware



Val d'Argan Winery

Day 7 Essaouira. After a leisurely breakfast we will discover more of Essaouira on a walking tour. This is the most photogenic town in the whole country with so many contrasts in the architecture, colour and people. We explore the souks and the carpentry workshops, devoted to cedar and thuya wood carving, and visit the spice market and Berber jewellery workshops. Essaouira has attracted artists and musicians from different parts of the world and we will take time to discover some of their works in the different art galleries of the city. From here we will drive a few miles south into the Argan forest to discover this tree, unique to Morocco and visit a women's cooperative which makes the famous Argan oil. We will then join a local family in their home for a traditional lunch. Return to the hotel and enjoy the remainder of the afternoon and evening at leisure. (B, L)

Day 8 Marrakech. After breakfast we head back to Marrakech and begin at the Menara gardens, established in the 12th century. We will visit the historical pavilion and see the artificial lake which was a part of a sophisticated system of irrigation. This reservoir is supplied with water thanks to an old hydraulic system, which conveys water from the mountains through underground aqueducts. Continue our tour with a walk through two city gardens, Arset Moulay Abdessalam and El Harti Gardens which is located in the new city but dates back to the Almoravid dynasty. Here we will walk along the Olive Avenue, see the Desert Cactus Garden and the Rose Garden. We return to the Hotel Sofitel Marrakech and enjoy our final afternoon at leisure. Our Farewell Dinner tonight will be at Yacout, the most spectacular restaurant designed by the American, Bill Willis and now owned by the Honorary British Consul of Marrakech. (B, D)

Day 9 Marrakech to London. Transfer to Marrakech airport for our return scheduled flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

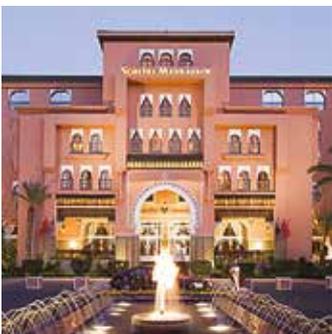
Twin: **£2895** Single: **£3995**

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Four nights accommodation at Hotel Sofitel Marrakech Lounge & Spa in a Superior Room • Two nights accommodation at Domaine de la Roseraie & Spa, Ourigane in a Junior Suite • Two nights accommodation at L'Heure Bleue Palais, Essaouira • Meals as indicated (B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner) • English-speaking guide • Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance.



Hotel Sofitel Marrakech Pool and Gardens

YOUR ACCOMMODATION IN MOROCCO



Hotel entrance



Pool Lounge and Bar



L'Orangerie Restaurant

Hotel Sofitel Marrakech Lounge & Spa

Just a short walk from the Jemaa El Fna square, the five-star Hotel Sofitel is a contemporary Andalusian-style hotel set in exotic gardens. A place of calm and relaxation, the hotel offers a high level of service and hospitality. The hotel features a choice of bars and restaurants, two swimming pools and an extensive luxury spa area. The guest rooms are beautifully furnished, each with a balcony overlooking either the town or hotel gardens and all feature a marble bathroom with tub, hairdryer, Wi-Fi access, cable/satellite television, minibar, safe and air-conditioning.



Bedroom



Spa



Pool



Lounge and Bar



The Rose Garden



Spa and Indoor Heated Pool



Main Building and Gardens

Domaine de la Roseraie & Spa, Ouirgane

Domaine de la Roseraie & Spa features typically Moroccan architecture and is situated in 60 acres of parkland amongst flower beds, olive trees, orchards and, as the name suggests, plenty of rose bushes. Located in the village of Ouirgagne in the Atlas Mountains, only an hour away from the hubbub of Marrakech, the hotel is a place of total tranquility. Facilities include a spa with indoor pool and hydrotherapy jets, a large Jacuzzi, a traditional hammam, a sauna and a gym. There are also two other pools and a tennis court. The onsite restaurant serves classical Moroccan and international food. The 44 comfortable rooms and suites are scattered throughout the grounds and fuse traditional Moroccan stucco and tadelakt (lime plaster). All of the rooms offer a mix of modern comforts with homely touches and open onto private patios and terraces with stunning views.



The Patio



The English Lounge



Spa and Traditional Hammam



The Oriental Restaurant



Bedroom

L' Heure Bleue Palais, Essaouira

L' Heure Bleue Palais in Essaouira is a Relais & Châteaux hotel and offers exceptional hospitality. The hotel is located just 400 metres from the beach, in central Essaouira. The property is first and foremost a charming house before being a luxury hotel, a place where privacy and comfort are synonymous with the size of the riad - just 33 rooms and suites are available in this historic home. The rooms are spread around a central courtyard and the hotel features a terrace with a heated outdoor pool with panoramic views of the Medina and the sea. Accommodation is spacious and elegantly decorated and rooms feature flat-screen televisions and marble bathrooms. Several dining options are available serving both international and Moroccan cuisine. The hotel's cosy bar, the English Lounge, features a piano and a fireplace. There is also a cinema room, a hammam and a massage room. Facilities include free Wi-Fi access, room service and an onsite currency exchange.



Rooftop Pool and Terrace

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: Menara Gardens, Marrakech.