

Africa

# Chigaga: The Sahara Beyond









## trip highlights

- Trek through Morocco's remote Sahara on a point-to-point journey through the dunes of Erg Chigaga
- Experience supported desert camping among sweeping dunes, stony plains and tamarisk groves, with a local trekking team and camel support
- Visit Tamgroute to discover its historic manuscripts and traditional pottery-making heritage
- Explore desert oases and learn how local communities use traditional irrigation systems to sustain life in the Sahara's arid environment
- Discover the historic Kasbah of Ait Ben Haddou and cross the dry Lake Iriqui basin by 4WD to Foum Zguid



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| **Trip Duration** | 8 days | **Trip Code:** SCG |
| **Grade** | Moderate | |
| **Activities** | Adventure Touring | |

## welcome to World Expeditions

Since 1975 we have run expedition-style adventures for active travellers, from our first trek in Nepal to remote routes on all seven continents.

Our philosophy is simple: take the paths less travelled. That means small groups, local crew, low impact, and routes most travellers never see.

Everything you need to know about the Chigaga: The Sahara Beyond is in these notes.

### why travel with World Expeditions?

Travelling through Morocco's remote mountain and desert landscapes requires careful planning, local knowledge and reliable on-ground support. Our itineraries are designed to balance active exploration with opportunities to experience the country's culture, landscapes and traditions.

Accompanied by experienced local guides and supported by dedicated trekking crews, you can focus on the journey while the practical arrangements are managed along the way. We work with local operators and communities, with an emphasis on responsible travel, respect for local cultures and minimising our environmental impact.

Our approach combines thoughtful itinerary design, experienced local leadership and well-organised logistics to help you explore Morocco with confidence.

# Chigaga: The Sahara Beyond

Experience Morocco's remote Sahara on a point-to-point trek through sweeping dunes, secluded oases and the rugged landscapes of Erg Chigaga.






We pair you with a traveller of the same gender, and if we can't, the room (and/or tent) is yours at no charge. Prefer your own space? Add the optional single supplement

## the trip

Discover a different side of Morocco's Sahara on this eight-day journey through the Draa Valley and into the remote dunes of Erg Chigaga. For travellers drawn to exploring the desert on foot, this supported trek follows a point-to-point route through stony plains, tamarisk groves, secluded oases and sweeping dune systems, with nights spent camping beneath the desert skies.

From Marrakech, cross the High Atlas Mountains and visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kasbah of Ait Ben Haddou before continuing south through Zagora to M'Hamid, where the trek begins. Accompanied by an experienced local trekking team and camel support, journey through Erg Ait Ounir, Erg Sahel and Erg Seddrate, following a route shaped by the desert's changing terrain and historic travel routes.

The trek culminates among the expansive dunes of Erg Chigaga, where an afternoon exploring the sands leads to sunset over the desert. Continue by 4WD across the dry Lake Iriqui basin to Foum Zguid, completing a point-to-point journey through the varied landscapes and cultural heritage of southern Morocco.

## at a glance

| | |
|---|---|
| DAY 1 | JOIN MARRAKECH |
| DAY 2 | DRIVE TO ZAGORA VIA AIT BEN HADDOU AND THE DRAA VALLEY |
| DAY 3 | DISCOVER TAMGROUTE POTTERY AND BEGIN THE SAHARA DESERT TREK |
| DAY 4 | TREK ACROSS DESERT PLAINS TO ERG SAHEL |
| DAY 5 | TREK AND EXPLORE THE REMOTE OASES EN ROUTE TO ERG SEDDRATE |
| DAY 6 | TREK TO THE SAND DUNES OF ERG CHIGAGA |
| DAY 7 | FINAL SAHARA DESERT WALK AND 4WD JOURNEY ACROSS LAKE IRIQUI |
| DAY 8 | RETURN TO MARRAKECH |

## what's included

- 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners
- Arrival airport transfer on day 1
- 3 nights in traditional Moroccan riads and lodges on a twin share basis
- 3 nights supported wilderness camping
- 1 night in a comfortable fixed desert camp
- English speaking tour leader throughout
- Camping equipment including tents, sleeping bags and foam sleeping mats
- Sightseeing and entrance fees as listed in itinerary
- Private transport

## what's not included

- Flights
- Travel insurance
- Visa
- Entrance fees for sightseeing not mentioned in the itinerary
- Aerated and alcoholic drinks, and bottled water
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips
- Anything not specifically mentioned as included

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## trip dates

**2027**

17 Jan - 24 Jan
18 Feb - 25 Feb
25 Mar - 01 Apr
07 Oct - 14 Oct
18 Nov - 25 Nov
02 Dec - 09 Dec

**2028**

27 Jan - 03 Feb
10 Feb - 17 Feb
30 Mar - 06 Apr
06 Apr - 13 Apr
05 Oct - 12 Oct
02 Nov - 09 Nov
07 Dec - 14 Dec
28 Dec - 04 Jan

## fast facts

**Countries Visited:**
Morocco

**Visas:**
Please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant*

**Vaccinations:**
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

**Private Groups:**
Available for this trip*

**Leader:**
Expert local bi-lingual leader

**Advice for people with limited mobility**
Not suitable

*Ask our staff for more information.

## detailed itinerary

### DAY 1 Join Marrakech

Arrive in Marrakech, the vibrant gateway to southern Morocco, where you will be transferred to your traditional riad. With its bustling souks, historic medina and the cultural hub Jemaa el-Fnaa, Marrakech provides an interesting introduction to Morocco before we venture south towards the Draa Valley and the vast desert landscapes of the Sahara. This evening, meet your tour leader and fellow travellers for a briefing on the journey ahead, followed by a welcome dinner featuring traditional Moroccan cuisine. Accommodation: Riad Berta or similar

**meals: D**

### DAY 2 Drive to Zagora via Ait Ben Haddou and the Draa Valley

Leaving Marrakech, we cross the High Atlas Mountains and descend into the Draa Valley, travelling towards the desert town of Zagora. En route, we visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kasbah of Ait Ben Haddou, a striking example of traditional earthen architecture set against the surrounding arid landscape. Once an important stop along historic desert trading routes, the kasbah offers an insight into the region's past before we continue towards Zagora, where we enjoy a walk through date-palm gardens and traditional fortified villages known as ksour. We spend the evening in Zagora, staying overnight in a local riad.

Accommodation: Riad Lamane or similar

Walking: ~2 hours

Driving: ~7–8 hours

Distance: ~390 km / 242 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

### DAY 3 Discover Tamgroute pottery and begin the Sahara Desert trek

Leaving Zagora, we travel south towards M'Hamid, stopping in Tamgroute for a locally guided visit exploring its manuscript heritage and traditional pottery workshops. Continuing towards the edge of the Sahara, the landscape gradually gives way to the open desert terrain surrounding M'Hamid. From here, we begin our trek into the low dunes of Erg Ait Ounir, experiencing the changing desert landscape as we make our way towards our first campsite. We finish the day at our mobile desert camp, where we spend the night surrounded by the Sahara's remote landscapes.

Accommodation: Mobile desert camp

Walking: ~6 hours

Walking distance: ~17 km / 10.6 miles

Driving: ~2 hours

Driving distance: ~100 km / 62 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

### DAY 4 Trek across desert plains to Erg Sahel

Today we continue our trek deeper into the Sahara, leaving Erg Ait Ounir behind as we make our way towards Erg Sahel. Accompanied by our camel support team, we cross open stony plains, pass through tamarisk groves and navigate a series of smaller dune systems. The changing terrain reveals the contrasting landscapes of

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## thoughtful travel

Our trips operate in small groups with experienced local guides and support crews, following responsible desert trekking and camping practices.

On this trek, camels are used to transport luggage and camping equipment, accompanied by local cameleers. We work with our local operator to promote responsible pack animal welfare practices.

Information about our community partnerships and the World Expeditions Foundation is available on our website.

## trip grading

**Moderate**

This trip is graded Moderate and involves trekking for generally 5–6 hours per day across varied desert terrain, including rocky plains, dry valleys and sand dunes. Walking conditions can be challenging due to soft sand, uneven ground and exposure to the sun. Day 3 is a particularly full day, combining approximately 6 hours of trekking with a transfer and a cultural visit to Tamgroute. A reasonable level of fitness and previous walking experience are recommended.

## adventure travel

Adventure travel involves the unexpected. In remote regions conditions change, and itineraries may be altered at short notice.

Flexibility gets you far more out of the trip than a fixed plan will.

If you are unsure whether this trip suits you, talk to us before you book.

## important note

These notes are current at the date shown on each page and replace any earlier version.

The itinerary is a guide. It may change due to weather, conditions on the ground or other circumstances beyond our control.

the desert, from rocky expanses to stretches of sand and scattered vegetation. By late afternoon, we reach the isolated dunes of Erg Sahel, where we settle into our mobile desert camp for the night.

Accommodation: Mobile desert camp

Walking: ~5 hours

Walking distance: ~15 km / 9.3 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

### DAY 5 Trek and explore the remote oases en route to Erg Seddrate

Leaving the dunes of Erg Sahel, we continue our trek through the increasingly remote landscapes of the Sahara towards Erg Seddrate. Along the way, we traverse open desert terrain, making our way towards a well and the oasis of Erg Smar. Historically used by travellers crossing the desert, this oasis offers an insight into the importance of water sources along traditional desert routes, where we stop for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon, we continue towards Erg Seddrate, where we settle into our mobile desert camp for the night.

Accommodation: Mobile desert camp

Walking: ~5–6 hours

Walking distance: ~16 km / 9.9 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

### DAY 6 Trek to the sand dunes of Erg Chigaga

Today we continue our journey across the final desert plateau, making our way towards the vast dune system of Erg Chigaga. As we approach, the open desert landscape gives way to sweeping sand dunes, marking a change in scenery after several days of trekking through the Sahara. In the afternoon, we explore the surrounding desert and climb one of the dunes to watch the sunset over the landscape. We then settle into to our fixed desert camp, where we spend the night among the dunes.

Accommodation: fixed desert camp

Walking: ~5 hours

Walking distance: ~14 km / 8.7 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

### DAY 7 Final Sahara Desert walk and 4WD journey across Lake Iriqui

This morning, we enjoy a final walk through the dunes of Erg Chigaga before boarding our 4WD vehicles for the journey towards Foum Zguid. Crossing the vast, dry basin of Lake Iriqui, we travel through an expansive desert landscape of open plains and arid terrain. In the late afternoon, we explore a local oasis on foot, learning about traditional irrigation systems and the importance of water conservation in this desert environment. We finish the day in Foum Zguid, where we spend the night at a locally owned desert lodge.

Accommodation: Hotel Bab Rimal or similar

Walking: Morning dune walk

Driving: ~3–4 hours (4WD)

Driving distance: ~100 km / 62 miles

**meals: B,L,D**

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**DAY 8 Return to Marrakech**

After breakfast, depart Foum Zguid for the return journey to Marrakech, travelling through the varied landscapes of southern Morocco. The drive takes approximately 7–8 hours, with stops along the way.

Your trip concludes on arrival in Marrakech. As this is a full day of travel, we strongly recommend arranging an additional night in Marrakech and booking your onward flight for the following day. Please note that accommodation and airport transfers are not included at the end of the tour.

Driving: ~7–8 hours

Driving distance: ~400 km / 249 miles

**meals: B**

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

## suggested extensions

**Essaouira Sojourn**

## country information

The Amazigh (Berber) people are among Morocco's earliest known inhabitants, with a history stretching back thousands of years. Morocco's position between Africa, Europe and the Mediterranean has shaped its development through centuries of trade, migration and cultural exchange. Phoenician and Carthaginian traders established settlements along the coast, followed by Roman rule over parts of northern Morocco. Roman sites such as Volubilis remain important reminders of this period, while Jewish communities also formed part of the country's early history.

Islam spread into Morocco from the 7th century, bringing significant religious, cultural and political changes. The Idrisid dynasty, established in the late 8th century, laid the foundations for an independent Moroccan state. Later Amazigh dynasties, including the Almoravids and Almohads, extended their influence across North Africa and parts of the Iberian Peninsula. The Marinids followed, contributing to the development of cities, architecture and centres of learning. The Saadian dynasty rose to power in the 16th century, followed by the Alaouite dynasty in the 17th century, which continues to rule today. King Mohammed VI has been Morocco's monarch since 1999.

During the early 20th century, growing European influence led to the establishment of French and Spanish protectorates in 1912. Under colonial administration, new roads, railways and urban districts were developed, alongside changes to Morocco's political and economic structures. The independence movement gained momentum during the 1940s, and Morocco regained its independence in 1956.

Today, Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with a population of approximately 36.8 million, according to the 2024 national census. The country's cultural identity reflects its Arab and Amazigh heritage, alongside longstanding African, Mediterranean and European influences. Islam is the predominant religion, while Morocco also has a significant Jewish cultural heritage. Arabic and Amazigh are the official languages, with Moroccan Arabic (Darija) widely spoken in everyday life. French remains commonly used in business, education and tourism, while regional Amazigh languages are spoken throughout the Atlas and Rif Mountains and southern Morocco.

Education and literacy have improved considerably in recent decades. According to the 2024 census, approximately 75% of the population aged 10 and over is literate, although differences remain between urban and rural communities.

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Morocco is renowned for its rich artistic and cultural traditions, including music, ceramics, textiles, leatherwork and jewellery. Its historic medinas, traditional kasbahs, vibrant markets and regional cuisine reflect centuries of craftsmanship and cultural exchange. From the Atlas Mountains and fertile valleys to the vast landscapes of the Sahara, Morocco offers travellers opportunities to discover its history, traditions and diverse communities.

## climate

The Sahara Desert experiences significant temperature changes between day and night. From October to April, daytime conditions are generally suitable for desert trekking, although October and spring can still be hot. Winter days are usually mild, while overnight temperatures can approach freezing, particularly from December to February. Wind, blowing sand and occasional rain are possible, especially during spring. Travellers should prepare for strong sunshine, cool evenings and changing desert conditions.

During winter, snowfall may affect travel across the Tizi n'Tichka Pass in the High Atlas Mountains, potentially causing delays or itinerary adjustments.

## dietary requirements

Tell us at least one month before departure and we can cater for vegetarian diets and most medically recommended diets, including allergies and intolerances. Options are limited in remote locations. Some alternatives cost more or are not available, and on some trips you may need to bring your own food. We cannot guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip. Travellers with severe allergies must carry their own medication and be able to self-administer it.

## accommodation on the trip

Accommodation is on a twin-share basis throughout the trip, unless single accommodation is requested and paid for in advance. Single travellers will be matched with another traveller of the same gender where possible.

We use comfortable traditional riads and lodges in Marrakech, Zagora and Foum Zguid. During the trek, we spend three nights wilderness camping in the Sahara, followed by one night in a comfortable fixed desert camp at Erg Chigaga. Tents, sleeping bags and foam sleeping mats are provided. Accommodation properties are subject to change depending on availability.

## pre and post tour accommodation

If you would like assistance with pre-tour accommodation please ask your reservations consultant for details.

## what you carry

In your daypack you will need to carry extra warm clothing (depending on the altitude, location and weather), a rainjacket, water bottle, camera gear, valuables and personal items such as sunscreen, lip-eze etc. All group gear and your luggage is moved by our team.

## equipment required

Specialist gear required includes comfortable trekking shoes, a windproof jacket, sun protection, a scarf or buff, and a daypack (a comprehensive gear list is provided in the pre-departure information upon booking).

## vehicles & safety

We use a range of vehicles, each chosen for the route and the conditions.

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Transport safety laws differ from those at home. We use vehicles with seatbelts wherever they are available, but some vehicles will not have them fitted.

## visas

Visas are exempt for passport holders from the following countries:-

Australia

New Zealand

Canada

United States

United Kingdom

All other nationalities should check with your nearest embassy or consulate.

You may also need visas for countries you transit on the way. Check the requirements for every country on your route.

Visa costs and rules change often, so confirm with your Reservations Consultant or travel agent. Obtaining your visas is your responsibility.

## carbon footprint & climate action

We measure the estimated carbon emissions of our trips to better understand their environmental impact and identify opportunities to reduce emissions, rather than relying on carbon offsets.

Our Carbon Labels, calculated with independent carbon consultancy ecollective, estimate emissions from accommodation, meals, ground transport, activities and guiding. International flights are not included and can represent a significant proportion of your overall travel footprint.

You can help reduce your travel emissions by choosing direct flights where practical, flying economy and taking fewer, longer trips.

Learn more under Climate Action in the Responsible Travel section of our website.

## webinars & events

Join a live webinar to hear about a trip from the people who run it, and ask your questions directly. Can't make it live? Watch it on demand.

Upcoming sessions are on our website and in our enewsletter.

## private groups

The adventures you see on our website are just the starting point. We can tailor an itinerary around your interests, preferred dates and group.

Whether you're travelling with friends, family, colleagues, a club or community, talk to our team about creating an adventure that's uniquely yours.

## subscribe to our e-newsletter

New trips, new departure dates and offers, straight to your inbox. Subscribe free on our website.

## social networking

Follow @worldexpeditions on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Tag #WorldExpeditions on your trip photos and videos to be featured.

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## trip availability

We run small groups, so places go early. Check availability online, or call our team, who can often find options the website does not show.

Some trips depend on services we cannot confirm until you book, such as internal flights or permits. Booking early is the surest way to get the departure you want.

## how to book

Book online, or call or visit one of our offices. You will complete a Booking Form and pay a non-refundable deposit.

Please do not book flights or make any other arrangements until your Reservations Consultant has confirmed every service on your trip.