

BARCELONA TO MARRAKECH RAIL ADVENTURE

Day 1 – Welcome to Barcelona.

Hola, Barcelona! One of our team will be waiting for you at the airport with a warm smile in place, and ready to whisk you directly to your hotel. Official kick-off is tonight, so be ready to go by 6pm – it's your first dinner with your Spanish guide and fellow Explorers!

Accommodation: Hotel Astoria (or similar), Barcelona, Spain

Included: Dinner

Day 2 – The Two Sides of Barcelona: Hidden Alleys & Iconic Wonders

Escape the crowds and step into the real Barcelona with a stroll through the vibrant, lesser-known neighbourhood of El Clot. Discover hidden architectural gems, taste regional delicacies at a 19th-century market, and experience a sustainable side of Barcelona most travellers completely miss! Then onto the Sagrada Familia to stand in wonder of its ornate facade. At that moment you'll come to understand what all the fuss over Gaudi is about. Inside and out, this architectural creation will have you questioning all you know about building design.

Tapas tonight – it might be your first, but it won't be your last – and we doubt you'll be complaining about that. Yum!

Accommodation: Hotel Astoria (or similar), Barcelona, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3 – Montserrat, Rack Railway & Funicular

It's day three and your first train ride – and what a day of trains we have in store for you! First, you'll head inland by commuter train with your guide. Then it's goodbye commuter and hello rack-and-pinion on the Cremallera de Montserrat. Look to the left, and you'll catch your



breath at the valley views far below. Look to the right and you'll be catching it once more, wondering how on earth your train continues to cling to the sheer mountain face, like hand in glove!

At the top, Montserrat Monastery is not there to disappoint. The compulsion to sit in a pew of the Basilica and gaze upward at the towering ceiling vaults is impossible to ignore. Above the altar, you'll spy the Black Madonna, framed by an ornate window – that's if you're not prepared to join the line of pilgrims to see the 12th-century statue up close. Even non-believers can be swept up by the energy and feel a sense of spirituality.

Accommodation: Hotel Astoria (or similar), Barcelona, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 4 – Madrid

This morning you'll be rocketing to the nation's capital by high-speed train. It's comfy and it's fast. In around two-and-a-half hours of slipping silently through the countryside, you'll be arriving at Madrid's largest train station, Madrid Atocha. There's a transfer waiting to take your group directly to your hotel, but make sure you grab a photo or two – this building is a landmark, inside and out.

There's some free time this afternoon before you head out with your guide to explore the most famous bits of the city. However, if you're itching to get out and experience your newest city sooner, we've got you covered! There's a culture fix that's just a short walk away from your hotel, at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum.

Accommodation: Soho Boutique Congreso (or similar), Madrid, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5 – Toledo and Tapas

As you're led through the UNESCO town of Toledo this morning, it's OK to spend a moment taking it all in. After all, it's not every day you get to experience a place with so much history! Known as Toletum by the Romans, its existence is documented as 2000 years old! Today, you'll explore the streets and architecture that is a testament to that empire and all the conquerors that followed. Standing before cathedrals, synagogues and mosques, there's no wonder Toledo is known as the City of Three Cultures.



Once you have your bearings, you're welcome to explore on your own, or maybe you'd prefer to take a seat at an adorable cafe for a long lunch and some Toledoan people-watching!

Swap stories with your Magnificent Explorers family on the train back to Madrid. It's been a full-on day, so rest up for an hour or two before dinner... this tapas tour is as local as it gets!

Accommodation: Soho Boutique Congreso (or similar), Madrid, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 6 – The Moorish Legacy of Granada

It's fair to say that so far, you've been out and about straight after breakfast every day, so if you fancy a bit of a lay-in this morning, be our guest! However, if the afternoon is too far away for your next train experience, you're welcome to admire some retired specimens with your guide at Madrid's train museum at Elicias Station. This terminus has its own history to tell too.

This afternoon, we recommend keeping a book handy because the train trip to Granada takes around three-and-a-half hours. Then it's 'bags down' at your hotel and 'out the door' with your guide for a short leg stretch and a cosy group dinner. Six days into the trip already and what was once a group of strangers is now a cheery bunch of Magnificent Explorers friends!

Accommodation: Hotel Monasterio de los Basillos (or similar), Granada, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 7 – Alhambra and Cordoba

The medieval Moorish city of Alhambra is calling your name this morning, so pack your bags before breakfast because this afternoon you're on the train to Cordoba. Can you believe this will be your last Spanish train ride of the trip?

By the late 1200s Christian kingdoms had recaptured much of Spain from the Moors – except for Alhambra. This city continued as a stalwart of Moorish Muslim culture in the region for another two hundred years. This morning, your specialist guide will charm you with



tales of conquerors and the conquered, and roam with you in the Palaces of Nasrid and Charles V.

After a quick transfer to Cordoba, there'll be just enough time to sneak in an orientation spin around town before dinner. Like what you see? Yep – the old town is dripping with Roman and Middle-Age-Islamic cultures. Tonight is just a taster for what's to come in the morning!

Accommodation: Hotel Patios de Cordoba (or similar), Cordoba, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 – Cordoba and Mezquita Cathedral

You're at an advantage this morning, because most travellers are just day trippers to Cordoba, and you're fortunate that all this beauty is laid out, just outside your hotel door! So go make the most of the quiet pre-tourist rush with your guide, especially Mezquita Cathedral. Converted from a mosque in the 13th century, the site has grown in size from several incarnations and is ENORMOUS – so take as much time (and as many photos) as you want. Your train to Seville is not due to depart until 2pm.

Accommodation: Hotel Catalonia Giralda (or similar), Sevilla, Spain

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9 – Flamenco

Today, you'll leave the trains behind and spend the day discovering another side of Seville. Wander its charming streets, soak up the lively atmosphere, and admire the city's beautiful blend of Moorish and Spanish architecture before enjoying some free time to explore at your own pace.

Then, for a complete change of pace, swap those sensible walking shoes for something with a bit more pizzazz. Even if you've got two left feet, it's all for a bit of fun as you join your group for a private Flamenco dance lesson! Later, let the professionals show you how it's done during a captivating Flamenco performance at the Cultural Centre. Even though you're sitting this one out, we bet you'll be tapping your foot in time anyway!

Can you believe it's your last night in Spain? Best make the most of it with a late supper alongside your Explorers crew—after all, we promised there would be more tapas!

Accommodation: Hotel Catalonia Giralda (or similar), Sevilla, Spain



Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 10 – Morocco, you're on your way!

Any sadness for leaving Spain today is quickly replaced with excitement about your Moroccan adventures yet to be had. And it's not until you leave the Tarifa to Tangier ferry behind, and are delivered into the hands of your Moroccan guide, that there'll be hugs and goodbyes for your Spanish guide – someone who you've grown to adore over the last 10 days!

If there was any doubt, you're finally in Morocco, checking into your riad hotel inside the Medina will squash that. This place is an elegant explosion of Moroccan colours, patterns and furnishings. And afterwards, you'll dive headfirst into your new favourite cuisine at a local restaurant – it's one of your guide's favourites.

Accommodation: El Minzah Hotel (or similar), Tangier, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 11 – Tangier & Chefchaouen

Smack-bang at the intersection of two continents, Tangier was a strategic trade centre for many centuries. The city's more obscure curiosities will pique your interest too though! Did you know Tangier is the original home of the citrus tangerine, the first brewer of Morocco's famous mint tea and the apparent resting place of the Roman God, Hercules?!

This morning, your group will explore Tangier with your guide and uncover a kaleidoscope of cultures that have come to call it home. Finish up by savouring lunch together, surrounded by the white-washed walls and colourful merchant stalls of the old medina. You may be thinking, "Is this real, or am I on a movie set?!"

From 'The Door of Africa' to the 'Blue Pearl', it's just a two-and-a-half hour drive from Tangier to Chefchaouen this afternoon. Your first introduction to the Blue City is at dinner. Wowwee – can this day get any more astonishing?

Accommodation: Riad Nila (or similar), Chefchaouen, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner



Day 12 – Blue City Delights

You're best to lace up your walking shoes today because the charming blue alleyways of Chefchaouen are tucked neatly away in a valley between two peaks in the Rif Mountains and can only be explored on foot. Make sure your camera battery is charged-up too because there's a bunch of must-have photos around every corner today. We're curious to hear what ends up being your favourite subject – will it be that famous staircased laneway, an ad-hoc collection of unique doorways, the pop of red terracotta on the roofs... or will it be the cats?

See the day close out with a rooftop drink at sunset with your Magnificent Explorers crew.

Accommodation: Riad Nila (or similar), Chefchaouen, Morocco

Included: Breakfast

Day 13 – Fes

There's one more road trip before you're introduced to train travel in Morocco, but we promise Fes is worth it! Known as the cultural and spiritual heart of the country, the city is vibrant, noisy and more than a tad chaotic – even inside the Medieval-aged Medina where there are no cars!

After hotel check-in, we've got a special treat for you. The relaxing and cleansing Moroccan Royal Hamman ritual is centuries old and afterwards, your skin will glow with a freshness that only black soap and rose water can produce. Don't worry if you're feeling shy – the attendants are caring professionals and you can always opt for the foot-and-hand version, instead of the full-body experience! Either way, while you're sharing Fes's signature dish pastilla with your Magnificent Explorers crew tonight, there'll be plenty of chuckles over how you all came to have such youthful complexions!

Accommodation: Riad El Amine (or similar), Fes, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 14 – Old Fes

As you step into Fes El Bali or the labyrinth of alleyways that make up the old Medina, you'll



feel like you're also stepping back into the Middle Ages. At the heart of it, you'll find beautifully restored Mosques and Madrassas. The Islamic tile and decorative fret-work of the Medressa El Attarine and the eighteenth-century Inn called Funduq al-Najjari, are nothing short of splendid!

Not to be missed is the tannery, where you'll stand shoulder-to-shoulder with your Explorers crew aweing over the circular rows of dye pits – colourful, yet gnarly and stained from a thousand years of tanning processes.

Head back to your hotel later in the afternoon and if you're feeling like a little me-time, tonight's your night. But if you're up for dinner out and about, your guide can make recommendations.

Accommodation: Riad El Amine (or similar), Fes, Morocco

Included: Breakfast

Day 15 – Meknes and the Roman Capital of Volubilis

The old city walls of Meknes are still standing and inside was once home to the imperial capital of the Alawite Kingdom. On the way to Volubilis, you'll explore some of Meknes' highlights with your guide – including Bab Mansour Gate which boldly punctuates the sandy-coloured walls with its dominating key-lock shape entrance and ornate surrounds.

After a brief Meknes leg stretch, it's onto Volubilis. The drive takes you across hills that roll like gentle waves into one another, and then suddenly Volubilis pops into your view. Unassuming and overpowering at the same time, the remnants of this 3rd-century frontier town of the Roman Empire are perched on a small hill surrounded by fields. As you stand amongst the ruins here, not only will the true reach of Romanisation become real to you, so will the enormity of the journey you are on. It's day fifteen and you're exploring another great metropolis on your second continent.... all in one adventure!

Wrap up today with a late lunch of home-cooked couscous. Enjoy your last evening in Fes how you please. Sleep well because tomorrow you're jumping aboard your first Moroccan train!

Accommodation: Riad El Amine (or similar), Fes, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 16 – Casablanca

You'll be stepping aboard an Al-Atlas train this morning. The sleek-nosed fast train promises your first ride on a Moroccan train will be comfy, and most likely on time! The journey takes around five hours, including a simple lunch. But don't be in too much of a hurry to leave Fes behind, because its train station is well worth a second look and a photo or two.

Unfortunately, Casablanca City doesn't hold true to all of Hollywood's romantic adaptations, but you're still going to love seeing the best bits with your guide. Then it's back to the hotel for a spruce-up because tonight you're dining somewhere special. While the Hollywood version didn't really exist, tonight's dinner venue was reimaged with painstaking detail into a real-life piano-playing, glamorous restaurant. Are you getting the picture?

Accommodation: Gray Boutique Hotel (or similar), Casablanca, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 17 – El Jadida

Here's looking at you kid! Goodbye, Casablanca and hello El Jadida – Morocco's beachside escape for affluent city folk. It's only a sixty-minute train ride, but unlike yesterday, be prepared for a really local trip!

El Jadida was once a strategic strong-hold for the Portuguese, and the remaining Gothic-European buildings and the preserved street names add to its authenticity. You'll spend time with your guide exploring this Atlantic seaside pocket. Then tonight, it's dinner out on the town with your Explorers crew once more. The affluence of this neighbourhood means the restaurants here are top-notch!

Accommodation: Mia Mazagan Hotel (or similar), El Jadida, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 18 – Marrakech

Marrakech is on your horizon today, but first, you'll need to transfer back to the hustle-and-bustle of Casablanca, to catch your final train of the trip. It's less than a



three-hour ride, so you'll hit the ground running in Marrakech late this afternoon when your personal chef guides you through the exotic isles of the Souk (market). Together, you'll be cooking up a Tagine storm for dinner with the ingredients she buys. Not only is this your chance to load up on some insider Moroccan cooking tips, but you also get to hang out in her home!

With a full tummy and a filled heart, it's back to your beautiful riad accommodation right inside the Medina. This hotel is definitely one of the highlights of your trip – sweet dreams!

Accommodation: Riad La Clé d'Or (or similar), Marrakech, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 19 – Medina Life

The Marrakech Medina is one of the most celebrated and this morning you'll experience exactly why as you explore it with your guide. Come learn the secrets of navigating the zig-zagging lanes. Meet with local shop owners and craftsmen too – their stories of tradition and local life will leave you enthralled.

This afternoon? Well, that's up to you! We know the 'sensible you' might want to arrange your suitcase, but you must fight that urge because the adventure is not over yet! The Medina's colourful alleys are once more calling your name. And there's still time for a dip in the hotel's pool or another Hammam in the hotel spa... Not to mention the farewell dinner tonight, where you get to squeeze in more precious time with your guide and newfound Magnificent Explorers friends!

Accommodation: Riad La Clé d'Or (or similar), Marrakech, Morocco

Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 20 – Farewell Friends

Swap numbers and emails at breakfast, for it's time to farewell friends. It's not goodbye, rather see you again soon! Your airport transfer is included.

Included: Breakfast

