

MARRAKECH – DAKAR



Re-designed for the 2026-2027 season. This tour will take you to the North East of Mauritania and deep into the Sahara.

Join us as we journey through desert landscapes, remote coastal routes, and rarely visited communities. This trip is truly off-the-beaten path, through a part of the world that very few get to see.

Whether you join our Marrakech to Dakar trip or the Dakar to Marrakech trip; the destinations and highlights are the same.

Both trips are timed to run during the dry season.

Trip: Marrakech to Dakar (DKR-MRK)

Start Date: 5th October 2026 (at 09:00am)

Finish Date: 26th October 2026 (at 08:00am)

Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00am on 5th October 2026

Trip: Dakar to Marrakech (MRK-DKR)

Start Date: 29th March 2027 (at 09:00am)

Finish Date: 19th April 2026 (at 08:00am)

Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00am on 29th March 2027

NB: All trip itineraries are subject to change!

Summary & Key Highlights

- Journey from the **medinas of Morocco**, through the desert landscapes of **Western Sahara** and into the vibrant Atlantic port city of **Dakar** (or vice versa)
- Witness the famous **Djemaa El Fna square** in Marrakech as it comes alive at night with food stalls, story tellers, and snake charmers
- Explore **Essaouira's** historic walled medina
- Visit shipwrecks, the fishing harbour, and historical sites in and around **Tarfaya**
- Drive through the **Western Sahara** with its dramatic desert landscapes and miles of golden sand beaches
- Walk around the beautiful **Naila Lagoon**, home to an array of migratory birds
- Stay in the grounds of a traditional **Bedouin camp**
- Visit **Sidi Ifni** home of the impressive **Legzira sea arch**
- Enjoy Kite surfing or quad biking across the sweeping sand dunes of **Dahkla**
- Observe traders negotiating at the **camel market** in **Nouakchott**
- Visit the **centuries-old libraries** of **Chinguetti**, a world UNESCO heritage site

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- Spend time in the old Senegalese capital of **St Louis**, explore the streets of the old town characterised by its pastel-coloured colonial-era architecture
- Kick back on the banks of the **Senegal River**, in **Langu de Barbarie National Park**. With its impressive array of birdlife, a boat trip is a must for the wildlife enthusiast
- Explore cosmopolitan **Dakar** with its vibrant arts and crafts scene, superb music, museums, galleries, and mosques
- Take a trip to **Ile de Goree**, an intriguing island off the coast of Dakar known for its role in the Atlantic slave trade

Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

New for our 2026-27 season and tailored to focus on **Western Sahara** and **Mauritania**, we now offer this epic 3 week adventure. From camping through the desert in Western Sahara, to visiting the ancient libraries of **Atar** in northern Mauritania, we'll explore a part of the world very few ever visit.



Hot days and cool nights define the Sahara. We will spend at most 3 nights without facilities while bush camping our way through this vast and magnificent part of Africa.

If you enjoy off the beaten track adventures and want to experience the vast expanse of the desert, you'll love this trip.

Be prepared for a true overland adventure along a route dominated by stunning landscapes and scenery!

Week 1: Morocco and Western Sahara

Our first stop will be **Essaouira**, a historic port city on Morocco's Atlantic coast. Made famous for its depiction as 'Astapor' in Game of Thrones, Essaouira is also known for its 18th-century medina, a walled city with a mix of European and North African architecture. Wander the narrow streets, visit artisan workshops, or explore the fresh seafood markets.

We'll stock up on supplies before leaving Essaouira and start heading south. The next 4 days and 3 nights of bush camping remain flexible, but we'll aim to spend time in and around **Laayoune**, and **Tarfaya** before arriving in **Dakhla**.

First, we'll stop at **Sidi Ifni**, a former Spanish town dominated by white-washed and art-deco style buildings, including the old Spanish consulate. We'll visit **Legzira beach** to see the impressive sea arch. This beautiful stretch of coastline has been battered by the Atlantic wind and waves for centuries, resulting in 2 stunning sea arches, one which collapsed in 2016. Walking on the cliffs gives you the chance to take some great photos. If the tide is out you should be able to get some great shots posing under the arch.

Heading south, we will make a brief stop at **Naila Lagoon**, a beautiful lake surrounded by rolling sand dunes in the **Khnifiss National Park**. The lagoon is home to many migratory birds such as flamingos, grey herons and whimbrels, as well as a huge variety of fish.

Western Sahara, or **Sahara Occidental**, is classed by the United Nations as a 'disputed territory'. Many different tribes have called this region their home over the centuries. The **Saharawi** people of Western Sahara have been fighting for independence since the Spanish left in the 1970s. Huge swathes of the territory are ruled by Morocco, with a more autonomous region administered by the **Polisario**.

Tarfaya is the first significant town we will reach after crossing into Western Sahara from Morocco. In 1975 hundreds of thousands of Moroccans gathered at Tarfaya as a staging point to launch the '**Green March**' orchestrated by King Hassan. This was the event that saw Morocco attempt to stake its claim to Western Sahara after the Spanish agreed to leave the territory.

We'll spend a few hours around Tarfaya for a chance to visit sites of interest, including:

- A number of **shipwrecks** along the coastline which make for a dramatic scene as the Atlantic ocean erodes them one crashing wave at a time
- **Casamar (also known as Port Victoria)**; established by **Donald Mackenzie** it served as a small trading settlement on a rock off the coast in the 1870's
- The **monument to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**, who managed the **Aéropostale** during colonial times as mail was flown back and forth between France and Senegal

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- The fishing harbour where small artisanal boats compete with massive trawlers from all over the world for the huge variety of fish species

If time permits, we will stop at a local **hammam** that draws on natural thermal waters, the perfect way to wash away the Saharan dust before continuing on to our hotel in **Dakhla**. Located just 20kms or so north of the **Tropic of Cancer** on a narrow spit of land sticking into the Atlantic Ocean, the scenery in and around the city is beautiful. Pristine beaches and dramatic cliff faces dominate the view. Dakhla has become a well-known **kite surfing** destination due to the reliable coastal winds, and it's well worth going up the old Spanish lighthouse for great views of the surrounding landscape.

Week 2: Mauritania

Once we leave **Dakhla** it's a long drive through the desert to the Mauritanian border. As we drive between border posts we'll pass through an area of 'no-man's land' infamous amongst travellers for being strewn with land mines. The road is partly tarmacked these days and navigated by hundreds of vehicles a day. However, it's probably still one of the most intriguing border crossings in the world.

Our first night in Mauritania will be at **Nouadhibou**, a fishing town and the end of the line for the famous **iron ore train** that runs here from **Atar**.

From here we have a day's drive down to **Nouakchott** for the night at a local auberge before heading North East. Before reaching **Atar** we'll make a stop at **Terjet oasis** - a small unsuspected lush green paradise, in amongst the mountains of sand. It's a great place to take a short hike, or relax in the shaded river to cool off.

The next day you'll have time to explore **Atar** before heading out on a day trip to **Chinguetti**. We'll visit one of the 5 historic libraries here to get an insight into the significance of **Chinguetti** as a hub along the Saharan trading routes.

A full day's drive takes us back to **Nouakchott** where once again we will be welcomed at our auberge. The next day you'll have time to visit different sites of interest. The **fish market, or port de peche**, is considered one of the liveliest in all of West Africa, and guaranteed to impress with hundreds of colourful local fishing boats lined up along the beach. It's also worth visiting the bustling **central market**, or the **camel market**, to watch the traders negotiate amongst the crowds livestock. Mauritians are largely descended from the **Maures** and therefore have a unique ethnicity in this region. Mauritanian men wear a distinctive traditional robe called the '**Dara**' and women often wear a wrap around called the '**Malaffa**'.

Depending on the weather and road conditions we will cross the border into Senegal at either **Diama** or **Rosso**, where the River Senegal comes into view for the first time. The bright green landscape here is quite a contrast from the endless sand of the Sahara.

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Week 3: Senegal

Our first 3 nights in Senegal will be at **Langue de Barbarie National Park**, where we'll stay at a beautiful campsite on the banks of the **River Senegal**. The park's name translates as 'Tongue of the Berbar' as it lies on a narrow peninsula and was inhabited by the **Berber** tribe from **Morocco** for a period.

You'll have the chance to go on boat trips and guided walks to look for **sea turtles**, **monkeys**, and 160 different species of **birds**. Alternatively, relax in hammocks by the river and watch the fishermen coming and going in their colourful boats.

On one of our days here there will be the option to take a short drive north to the beautiful old colonial city of **St Louis**, the former capital of Senegal. Originally founded as a trading post, St Louis is located at the mouth of the **River Senegal** and is spread out along a narrow island, reached from the mainland by an impressive cast iron bridge.

The **old quarter** is full of colourful architecture from the French colonial period, with most buildings now home to a number of restaurants, bars, art galleries, and boutique clothing shops behind wooden shutters. Walking around the narrow streets is, at times, reminiscent of being in New Orleans or Havana.

As we wave the River Senegal goodbye it's one long drive to Dakar, our final destination on this trip. We'll have two nights to explore **Dakar**, a cosmopolitan and vibrant city, so there will be plenty of opportunity to see the sights. Lose yourself in art galleries and markets or visit the recently opened **Massalikul Jinaan mosque** or the **African Renaissance monument**. Take the ferry to the beautiful UNESCO listed island **Île de Gorée** to learn about its role in the Atlantic slave trade.

Looking for a longer adventure? This trip can be combined with our Dakar to Freetown and Freetown to Accra trips to make the ultimate West African overlanding trip.